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THE

SHIP CHANDLER

AND OTHER TALES

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BY

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"GASLIGHT AND DAYLIGHT"
"DUTCH PICTURES" "MAKE YOUR GAME"
ETC. ETC.

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THE SHIP-CHANDLER.

A Story of a Seaport One Hundred Years Ago.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THINGS LOOK BADLY.

LONGPORT in the West. It is a prosperous seaport now, and holds its own in its own trade; but a hundred years ago it was *the* port on the West coast of England. A Longport merchant was thought much of, even on London's proud Exchange. Way was made for him on the Canary walk and among the Barbadoes brokers; and he was looked for at the Globe and at Frank's. Great fortunes had come out of the Western seaport; wealthy heiresses from Longport had married parliament men and kinsmen of the great court lords. When princes travelled in the West they did not disdain to become the guests of the wealthy factors of Longport, and they were royally entertained with music, and wine, and dances, and feasting. Queen Anne's husband, his Royal Highness Prince George of Denmark, indeed, coming from Ireland in one of the royal yachts, and

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driven by stress of weather into Longport, had not scorned the Western hospitality. His Royal Highness ate two pounds avoirdupois of venison pasty, a brace of partridges, and a quart of custard at a sitting; drank two bottles and a half of Lisbon and one of Rhenish, smoked many pipes, and to all the courteous words of his entertainer made answer "*Est-il possible?*" For his Highness never became a proficient in the English tongue. Longport town was loyal and Hanoverian to the backbone, and abjured the Pope, the Pretender, and the Third Person, not to be mentioned to ears polite. Indeed, the shrewd burgesses often managed to turn a penny by their stanch adherence to the Protestant succession; and in '15 and '46 drove a thriving trade in judicious contracts for transporting convicted rebels to the Plantations; but Longport the suburb and Longport the country side adjacent, abode by the Jacobite way of thinking. A very erroneous way it was, and one that led, mostly, Tyburnwards. Most of the fox-hunting, punch-drinking squires of the neighbourhood, were of the Ancient Faith, or else non-jurors of the hottest theological temper. They drank the king's health "over the water," and called George the Second the Elector of Hanover. They thought Bishop Ken and Jeremy Collier the greatest of English divines, and kept Restoration Day with much rejoicing, and the evil anniversary of King Charles's martyrdom with gruesome solemnity. The "Calves' Head Club" would have had a bad time of it in Longport. They hated and despised the Longport traders, sneering at them as

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money-mongers, nip-cheeses, rats, and Roundheads. To return the compliment, the wary men of Longport, sitting in their counting-rooms, and chinking their broad pieces and spade guineas, denounced the squirearchy as profligates, rebels, and Papists; and when, as so frequently happened, they could contrive to get the fat acres of some gentleman of ancient lineage, but decayed fortune, under their thumbs, they foreclosed their mortgages with great promptitude and inexorable dispatch.

Longport sent two members for Parliament; it being a formality strictly observed, though tacit social compact, that each member returned should spend seventeen hundred pounds in the borough before his election, and five hundred within a month afterwards, and that no elector should sell his vote, but should, on the other hand, never be denied a tide-waitership or a riding-officer's place in the Custom-house, when such benefices became vacant. A candidate who wished to have his money's worth of Longport, usually came down to reside there for a season; but when Sir Sejanus Mac Leno, the Countess of Yarmouth's nominee, stood for the borough, (or at least hobbled for it, for sciatica and evil life had quite crippled him,) he sent down his nephew, young Captain Tarquin, formerly of the Green regiment of Horse, and this sprightly gallant managed in less than eight weeks, not only to spend the seventeen hundred pounds with which his generous uncle had provided him, in cock-fighting, badger-drawing, bull-baiting, card-playing, horse-jockeying, tavern-haunting, and other gaieties, but

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likewise negotiated his own precious signature on drafts of exchange, endorsed to sundry Longport scriveners, to the extent of at least twenty hundred pounds more. He never paid his obligations; but old Zachary Pounce of Milk-and-Honey-lane, obtained shortly after Captain Tarquin's departure a snug contract for supplying Wigsbey's Fusileers with havresacks; and no one was astonished to see Ishmael Ferris, the bill-broker of Trumpington-street, promoted to be one of the Philazers of the Exchequer.

The commerce of Longport was almost entirely colonial. She did some little business in Irish produce, and maintained three or four packet-brigs, which brought over periodically Irish recruits, fortune hunters, parsons on their promotion, and sedan-chairmen; but her chief and most remunerative trade was with the West Indies and the Southern Plantations. Many Longport merchants had branch establishments at Jamaica, Barbadoes, and the Carolinas. The roomy warehouses of the port overflowed with cotton and cochineal, with coffee and spices, with rice and molasses, with sugar and logwood, and hogsheads of rum, and puncheons of arrack. Of course Longport supplied the colonial isles and the Plantations with all their needments: with weapons and tea, with cloths and woven fabrics, with furniture and wine, with wigs and laced cocked hats even. But these were but trifling consignments, compared with the astonishingly liberal supply of human flesh and blood with which this business-like western port was but too happy to

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furnish the colonial possessions of his sacred Majesty King George. Black flesh and blood—negro flesh and blood—were the chief staple, and the Guinea Coast the intermediary of supply; but the Longportians were not at all particular as to colour; and in sickly seasons, when more than an average of fifty per cent. of negroes died in the middle passage, through fever or small-pox, or rotten biscuit or salted herrings, or want of space and air, or excess of fetters and flogging, the prudent men of Longport fell back on rebels and felons who had been cast for death at the Old Bailey, or at best had escaped Tyburn—busy as was the triple tree in our great grandfathers' days, they could not hang all the rogues they convicted—on condition of being transported, as assigned servants, to the Plantations. But there were times unpropitious to legitimate commerce, when the Highlanders and Cumberland peasants wouldn't rebel, and the assize calendars were annoyingly light. Nothing daunted, the Longport merchants continued to transact business in their favourite flesh and blood. By means of secret agency, and trusty confederates, with bludgeons of light Norway oak, they caught up decayed tapsters, ostlers trade-fallen, younger sons of younger brothers, discarded unjust serving men, ruined spendthrifts, fugitives from bailiffs, thief-takers, or his Majesty's messengers, broken tradesmen, destitute gamesters, and the like: all the cankers of a calm world and a long peace. Some went willingly, but more unwillingly; and if my Lord wished to be rid of a rival inferior in rank

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to himself; if Sir Ralph, quite tired out by the incorrigible profligacy of his younger born, began to think that a sea voyage, the air of a Carolinian tobacco plantation, and the correction of a cowhide would be of the greatest possible benefit to his health and morals; if a fine lady grew weary of the lacquey, on whom she looked as Lady Booby looked on Joseph Andrews; or if a gang of swindlers and coiners distrusted an associate, and suspected him of a correspondence with Justice De Veil, and of a hankering after the forty pounds blood-money, it is astounding to think in what a brief lapse of time the individual, quietly abstracted one evening over a bowl of punch in a crimp's tavern at Wapping or Rotherhithe, would find himself decoyed or conveyed to Longport, and shortly afterwards comfortably stowed at the bottom of the hold of a merchant-brig, weighing anchor for the spicy isles of Western India, or the sultry plantations of America; bilboes on his legs, and a large plaster on his head, to heal his broken bones withal. This merry traffic was called kidnapping. Runaway apprentices, utterly innocent emigrants from Ireland, and even the children of decent families, were sometimes dexterously abducted to swell a cargo of flesh and blood; for all was fish (or rather flesh) that came to the Longport dealers' net, and all was profitable labour that had two arms and two legs, and could handle a hoe, or pick a cotton-pod on the Plantations. Many of the stateliest fortunes in Longport owe their origin to the cheerful traffic thus mentioned—shame on the cruel laws which have put a stop to it:—and

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many navy-lieutenants were heard to declare that Longport was the very worst place in the United Kingdom for a moonlight excursion with the press-gang, for that the men of Longport secured anything that turned up in the way of manstealing for themselves.

But Deth and Weevil, in the Trinidad Piazzas, would have nothing to do with kidnapping. They would certainly furnish sea-going ships with manacles and shackles and bilboes and cowhides; but, with the absolute trade in humanity they would have nothing whatever to do. Solomon Weevil, junior partner, held up his hands, and blandly reprehended the practice as unchristian. Saul Deth, senior partner, said less, but resolutely set his face against the trade which the Longportians humorously called "fresh pork-broking." Saul Deth was a stern man, punctual in his payments, and known to entertain decided opinions. And yet there were few things in the commercial category with which Deth and Weevil, of the Trinidad Piazzas, were not prepared to furnish sea-going ships with. They sold cordage, tackle, bolts, and cables, and would rig out a vessel of any size from a brigantine to a three-master. They sold pitch and tar, and oakum, and spars, and glue, and sheet-copper. They would provision a ship with beef and pork (not fresh) and biscuit; with peas and flour, and sugar and potatoes, and Nantz brandy, and London, Geneva, and Guernsey shirts, and canvas trousers, and tobacco pipes, and charts, and astrolabes, and bibles and packs of cards, and hammocks, and medicine-chests,

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and carpenters' tools, and sail-cloth, and crockery-ware, and tobacco-pipes. With great modesty, the firm of Deth and Weevil called themselves not merchants, but Ship-Chandlers, and in a similar spirit of humility described their warehouse under the Trinidad Piazzas as a shop, and hung out a sign, the "Angel and Compasses;" but they were in reality as much merchants as the proudest dons of the Exchange-buildings, who dealt in flesh and blood, and entertained princes. Charter parties, bottomry bonds, and policies of insurance against wreck crowded their counting-room, as well as dock warrants and invoices of articles of ship-chandlery, sold and delivered; and it was of frequent occurrence to read in the "Longport Newsletter" (a gazette established during the residence in Longport, under pecuniary difficulties, of Mr. Daniel De Foe, citizen and liveryman of London) announcements of the arrival of the "Welcome Stranger," Bubb, master, with coffee from Antigua; or the "Good Old Cause," Barebones ditto, with rum and tortoiseshell from Jamaica, consigned to Deth and Weevil, of the Trinidad Piazzas. They turned over thousands in the course of the year; but at the Mayor's Feast, or the annual merry-making at the Town-hall, on the occasion of his Sacred Majesty's birthday, Solomon Weevil sat meekly below the salt, and was courteous even to the chaplain; while stern Saul Deth sent his duty to the Mayor and word that he had drunk the King's health on his knees and in herb tea in his chamber; but that he, a poor huckstering

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chandler, was not fit to sit at table with honourable merchants.

Both strict men of business; both rigid disciplinarians; both punctual paymasters; both pious, industrious, and sagacious, Solomon Weevil and Saul Deth were yet the most dissimilar partners that could well be imagined. They never disagreed, but there was no cordiality between them. Both were married men; but Mistress Weevil maintained no intercourse with Mistress Deth—not a solitary instance of estrangement, perhaps, between partners' wives; but strange enough when it is observed that Prudence Weevil and Patience Deth were sisters, and had never, ostensibly, quarrelled. Solomon Weevil was a tall, fair, no-eyelashed man, much freckled; much given to rubbing the palms of his hands together, with a soft, churning movement; and with a perpetual fawning smile pervading his countenance, and distending that wide mouth of his that was garnished with long, discoloured teeth, looking remarkably like fangs. He dressed habitually in snuff-colour, with narrow bands and sleeves, innocent of the mundane vanity of ruffles, and with large plated buttons; but on Sundays and festival days, he mounted a modest silver edging to his waistcoat, and put his plain beaver at half-cock. He was a churchman, but of the most subdued description; as far removed from Oxford as from Rome, and looked not quite unfavourably on the heresies of the two brothers Wesley, and a certain Whitfield, then gaining ground considerably. Heresies were rife a

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hundred years ago. There were Moravians, Boëhmenians, Zinzendorfians, Boëhlerians, Maxfieldians, followers of the mad tailor, Muggleton, and believers in Orator Henley. Mistress Weevil was a tall, big-boned, red-haired woman—tall enough and strong enough, and shrill enough in voice, but otherwise, in mind and person, a mere chip in porridge. She, too, was a churchwoman, but one even more heterodox than her husband, and made no secret of her predilection for the enthusiastic Methodist who wore his hair "loose and unpowdered," and preached among the colliers at Kingswood, and the beggars in Moorfields.

A completely different couple were Saul Deth and his wife. The senior in the firm of ship-chandlers was now forty years of age. He had been married two years—had wooed his wife by letter, and asked her in marriage of her mother (having previously taken the advice of the Elders of his congregation) before he deigned to consult his intended bride on this, to her, not unimportant matter. As for Solomon Weevil he had come no man knew whence. He had been a long time, it was rumoured, book-keeper in a factory of the Guinea coast; had reached England as supercargo of a vessel consigned to Longport; and, after some dealings with Saul Deth, had become his partner. They had been together ten years. But Saul Deth was a Longport man born and bred. His grandfather, a worthy woolstapler, had thanked Heaven publicly, standing on the steps of the broken cross in the High-street, in 1688, for the coming of

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King William. His great-grandfather had fought at Naseby, on the Parliament side, and was known as Strong-against-prelacy Deth, after the manner of nomenclature adopted by Captain Bind-their-king-in-chains, and Lieutenant Hew-Agag-in-pieces. Saul's father before him had been a nonconforming ship-chandler, who had frequently suffered fine and imprisonment for refusing to worship in prelatical steeple-houses. The great-grandson of the stalwart Ironside was a stern strong man, of short stature, but of powerful muscular development. His neck was so short, his shoulders were so rounded, and he stooped forward so, that his Jacobite adversaries derisively named him Hunchback; but he never heeded their taunts, and kept straight on in his stern, strong course. He had a fine forehead, clear gray eyes, and luxuriant dark hair, and the only vestige of vanity in his composition seemed to be in a disinclination to submit those flowing locks to the tonsor's shears. The lines of his face were harsh and rigid. His bloodless lips were always compressed. He never smiled. He drank water, and touched not tobacco. He said little on any subject, less against the pomps and vanities of the world. His looks were enough. Children fled from before him—young girls trembled at his aspect. Boisterous young men tried to laugh him down, and called him "Psalm-singing crop-ear;" but his disdainful silence vanquished them, and they were silent and slunk away from him. Although he was only a ship-chandler, keeping a shop at the sign of the "Angel

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and Compasses," the richest men in Longport capped to him as he passed, and were not offended when he only bowed his stern head in acknowledgment of the salute. He might have been Mayor, but he wrote to say he was not worthy. He was known to be an inflexible supporter of the government as by law established, and had given evidence at the Westchester assizes against two smugglers who had brought over dispatches from the Pretender in a lugger from Granville—evidence which brought those two men to the gallows—yet he accompanied them to the scaffold, prayed with them till they were turned off, and appeared to be frankly and freely forgiven by both criminals. Although Dissenters laboured under many disabilities a hundred years ago, he was too upright to conform to a church whose doctrines he renounced, and whose discipline he repudiated. He was a shining light among his own sect—the sternest, rigidest, most unbending sect of the day. He was an elder among the Ecstatic Brethren, or Emotionists of Longport; a sect that withstood persecution and derision for above half a century, but now numbered in its ranks many persons of wealth and influence. And it was whispered that in the meeting house alone, and among the Ecstatic Brethren, did his taciturnity cease, and that in the conventicle he could be voluble, eloquent, and impassioned. Solomon Weevil paid his rates and taxes, his tithes and Easter dues, unmurmuringly; but Saul Deth gave away large sums in private and undemonstrative charity. The deserving he never sent away

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empty, but to the idle and the dissolute he was inexorable; and to their tales of distress returned a curt, dry reference to Bridewell, the beadle, the stocks, and the whipping-post. How such a man could ever have come to be the husband of a young and pretty woman—for she was both—passed comprehension; but it was plain that he loved her very dearly, with all the sternness and the strength of fondness; and the goodwives and tattling maidens of Longport, who were downcast and silent before his face, did not scruple to aver behind his back that Patience could wind him round her little finger, and that Saul Deth was henpecked.

And mistress Patience his young and pretty helpmate. What more of her? Much more; but there is ample time, and you must wait.

One Sunday September morning, in the year of grace 1761, Samuel Loveday, commonly called "Grizzly Sam," warehouseman and porter in charge of the premises of Deth and Weevil, ship-chandlers, of the Trinidad Piazzas, was disturbed from his perusal of a good book by a violent knocking at the outer door of the warehouse, which formed one of a row of tenements beneath a ponderous wooden piazza on the quay facing the port. Longport was not on the sea, but on an estuary known as the Westchester waters, which ultimately narrowed into the river Swarl.

Grizzly Sam rose from his three-legged stool, muttering anything but the remarks that might have been expected on a Sunday morning, and from a student fresh from the perusal of a good

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book; and, kicking aside divers articles of ship-chandlery as he pursued his devious way through the casks, bales, cans, and sacks with which the warehouse was cumbered, and reaching the door with many grumblings and wheezings, proceeded to admit the impatient applicant, who, seemingly tired of knocking and shaking the staples, had taken to kicking lustily at the panels. Grizzly Sam, however, was a prudent man and a cautious; and he did not finally unhook the heavy chain that effectually barred the passage of the portal, before he had satisfied himself as to who the unseasonable visitor who knocked up a reputable ship-chandlery on a Sunday morning might be.

"Oh, it's you!" the warehouseman surlily remarked, as the aperture caused by the doors opening, disclosed the face and figure of a young man. "It's you, is it, Mr. Jackanapes? I should like to know what you want on a Sunday. You ain't too fond of coming to the counting-room on week-days, that one might look for you on this blessed day."

"Let me in—let me in, Sam Loveday," the young man addressed as "Jackanapes" impatiently exclaimed; "let me in, and don't stand prating there."

"There may be two 'pinions about that," the porter retorted, as he let the chain fall against the inner door-jamb with a clang, and stood aside to let the visitor enter. "Thank you for not calling me out of my name, though you do talk of my prating. I don't like to be called Grizzly Sam on

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Sundays; it ain't righteous. And what may your pleasure be, now you are come, Simnel Coxworthy?"

No titles of honour were permitted under the primitive discipline of the "Angel and Compasses." The senior partner was Saul Deth, and the junior Solomon Weevil, and the clerks, and packers, and warehousemen, were all addressed by their plain christian and surnames. The only exception to this rule was made in favour of Patience Deth, who was addressed by her equals as Mistress, and spoken of by her inferiors as Madam Deth.

By way of reply to the inquiry of the porter, he whom he accosted as Simnel Coxworthy, sat down on a bale of chamois leather, and began to pant as with exhaustion, and to wipe the perspiration from his face. He was by no means a good-looking young man, being snub-nosed, white-faced, and having a decided cast in his left eye. He wore his own hair, for wigs were implacably discouraged at the "Angel and Compasses," and even Solomon Weevil's meek flaxen scratch was looked down upon as a pestilent vanity. Mr. Coxworthy's own hair was of a drab hue, shot with whey, and had apparently last been cut with a knife and fork, so spiky and unequal as to length was it. He had very large hands and feet, and as to the former, traces of ink yet remained about the nails, to show that Mr. Coxworthy had not entirely cast off the old week-day Adam as a preparation for the Sabbath. Discourteously treated by nature, Simnel (who was third clerk and book-keeper in the ship-chandler's

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counting-house) had fallen back on art as a help to the deficient graces of his person. So he was dressed in his Sunday best, and wore a light blue camlet coat, and a flowered chintz waistcoat, silver-gray nethers, white stockings, and very large plated buckles to his shoes. His shirt was neatly puckered, and he carried a silver brooch in his Holland cravat, with an ebony anchor, in which glistened one of those famous crystals, known as a Longport diamond, set therein; and, but that he did not dare, and would have been immediately dismissed on discovery, he would have worn gold lace to his hat, ruffles to his wrists, and a lacquer-hilted sword at his side.

"Oh! Sam, Sam!" he cried at last, replacing in his pocket a very gay yellow pocket-handkerchief, with which he had been dusting his finery, "these are dreadful news."

"What news?" the porter asked, sententiously taking a tobacco-box, cutting a plug about half an ounce in weight, and inserting it in his mouth. Grizzly Sam was an industrious fellow, who always liked to be doing something, and manual labour being forbidden on the Sabbath, he usually occupied himself with chewing when he was not reading. For he could both read and write, this accomplished Sam Loveday, and being moreover invulnerably honest, and inflexibly faithful to the Firm, was properly looked upon as a treasure.

"What news?" he repeated, seeing that Simnel Coxworthy seemed more from his gestures inclined to beat his breast and to wring his hands, than to

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make coherent answers. "Has madam's monkey died, and are you going into mourning for your brother?" Sam could be grimly satirical at times. "Is the town-hall on fire? Has the 'Righteous Endeavour' come into port with our long-expected cargo of gold dust and elephants' teeth from Zambora? or has the Pretender landed at Peartall Point, to change our guineas for brass money, our Cordovan leather for wooden shoes, and our faith for Papistry? Speak! Simnel Coxworthy; can't you? Don't stand staring there like a cabin-boy brought up before the skipper for swallowing the burgoo as he mixed it."

"Worse, worse, worse," groaned the clerk. "Where is Saul Deth? I must have speech with him this instant."

"I think you'd better have speech with the keeper at the Tolzey, and be put along with the mad folks," the porter answered, with supreme disdain. "Don't you know, lumber-head, that you might as well seek to speak with King George as Saul Deth, the ship-chandler, on a Sunday? Don't you know that every Sabbath day our master crosses the water with Madam Deth, bless her pretty face, to Bartle Ferry, passes the day there, sits under the awakening ministry of the gracious Hiram Geddes, holds refreshing discourse with the brethren in the evening, and comes back again to wrestle with wild beasts at Ephesus in this ship-chandlery every Monday morning?"

"True, true, I forgot," Simnel made answer. "I must be out of my wits not to have started at once for Bartle Ferry."

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"You had best be in your wits before you go out of them; I never knew you had any. But it's no such easy matter, my young landlubber, to cross to Bartle Ferry on such a morning. It's Sabbath-day, and the Mayor is desperate hard on those who break it in idle ferrying and boating. If a ship puts to sea, wind and tide serving, good; but there's narrer a boatman would risk fining and stocking, to say nought of the fire of the Pit, to take you five miles across Westchester water. And let me tell you that the sky looks ugly, and the wind has a whistle that doesn't do my ears good to hear; and, if I'm not a dried stockfish, there'll be very dirty weather on the water before we're five hours older."

"Then," replied Simnel Coxworthy, rising, buttoning his blue camlet coat, and putting on an air of as much solemnity as his snub-nose and flat face were capable of, "it's my duty to tell you, Samuel Loveday, that Saul Deth, of the firm of Deth and Weevil, is RUINED."

"Brimstone and thunder!" quite forgetting decorum and the day, cried the porter, making towards his companion as though he would have sprung at him; "what do you mean?"

He stood a moment, after this outburst, looking somewhat sheepish and abashed. For Sam Loveday was a righteous vessel; and although an old sailor, and one who had seen much of the world and its many wickednesses, usually kept a sharp bit between his teeth.

"Don't swear, Grizzly Sam," said the clerk;

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"I mean what I said. I said ruined, and ruined I mean."

"In what way? Speak, or I'll choke you." And the porter looked as if he, too, meant what he said.

"He's ruined root and branch—ruined in goods and name. In this way. Could even a boat and a boatman be found to take me to Bartle Ferry, it would be too late—too late to save his credit—too late to save his life almost; for Saul Deth is not a man to survive dishonour, after he has once looked it in the face. Look through that window, Grizzly Sam, and tell me what you see."

"I see the Swarl full of stout ships. I see, far away north-east, the lantern of the lighthouse on Peartall Point."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; the *Minden* frigate riding at anchor; and the little *Cockshot* pink close under her lee. Many more craft, at anchor, and—yes, it must be—a craft I know well, standing out to sea. She's got a fair wind, and lucky's the ship that goes to sea on a Sunday—though it ain't over righteous; but she'll have ugly times of it before she rounds Westchester Castle. 'Ware the Craggy Millstones on which the *Marshal Tallard* went down with all hands aboard, last Tuesday was ten years."

"Do you know that craft—the schooner standing out?"

"Not a bit of it. Not even if I had the brightest spyglass Master Flamsteed ever fashioned. I never saw her before."

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"I'll tell you how she hails. She's the *Black Harry*, Captain Stoneyard."

"And what have we to do with the *Black Harry*, or her skipper, odd rot 'em—bless 'em and all of us, sinners as we be, I mean. I've heard tell that she's three part slaver and one part pirate; and I wonder the Custom-house jerkers don't seize her whenever that gibbet-faced Stoneyard has the impudence to put into Longport. But we've nothing to do with such Tyburn traps. We don't sell nigger creatures. Deth and Weevil don't sail under the black flag."

"Not so fast. As I'm a living, breathing, Christian book-keeper at ten guineas the quarter, Solomon Weevil is at this moment on board the *Black Harry*."

"He! what should he be doing there?"

"Flying from England; flying from his partner, and his wife, and his creditors. Flying to the Guinea coast or the Spanish Main, or the Devil, for aught I know. And flying with twenty thousand pounds in bank-bills and gold in his strong box."

"Twenty thousand pounds! boy, you're raving. Twenty thousand pounds is just the sum that's in that great strong iron chest in the counting-room yonder; over which I mounted guard last night, and over which I mean to keep good watch till Monday morning."

"You guard an empty box. Solomon Weevil drew out the money last night. Was he not the last in the counting-room? Did he not take away with him a pair of heavy saddle-bags, saying that he would ride early this morning to Westchester,

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where the Lord Bishop was to hold ordination of ten parsons? A goodly sight."

"Fool, rogue, knave," roared the porter, fairly seizing the clerk by the collar, and shaking him as a terrier would a rat; "you knew all this, and you held your tongue. You're in the robbery, you mealy-faced villain."

"Hands off," exclaimed Simnel, dexterously backing towards a pile of sacks of rice, and gently endeavouring to worm himself out of the camlet coat, on whose collar the porter preserved a tight grip. "Hands off, Sam, there's a good fellow. You'll see I'm not to blame."

"Speak, then," Grizzly Sam muttered; "you seem to know all about it. I wish I'd known what those saddle-bags held. I'd have had them out of Solomon Weevil's hands in a trice, even if I'd had his heart's blood into the bargain."

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO LETTERS.

"GONE with twenty thousand pounds—gone with twenty thousand pounds," Grizzly Sam repeated, almost mechanically. "And you knew it, and said nothing. Gone in the *Black Harry*, with Stoneyard, that hang-dog buccaneer, who had Captain Kidd for a grandfather, so folks say. Gone to the

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Spanish main, or the West coast, with Solomon Weevil's carcase, and Saul Deth's credit on board. Oh! there's some foul play here, good master of mine. You've been dipping your fingers, too, in the tar-barrel, or I'm a shotten herring, my trim companion. Say—out with it—how much has that smooth-faced hound given you to stand in with him? Are you to go snacks: for how much filthy lucre have you sold your master and your soul alive?"

"I knew it, but not in time to save Saul Deth from ruin—for it *is* ruin," the clerk said, seriously. "Many's the time I've told you that I bore Solomon Weevil no good-will. Simnel Coxworthy is not the man to be art or part with in his rogueries. He's bullied me about my petty cash keeping, the skinflint; as if red and black ink, and the best Bristol foolscap, and the finest goose-quills were to be baled out of the Westchester water with cannikins. He's bullied me about my compting, and because I don't cross my t's or dot my i's, till I feel almost inclined to knock his sour-faced head off. Come better, come worse, Saul Deth, although he wont be trifled with, is a stern man and a just. As for your asking me whether I have aught to do with this black business, I scorn your insinuations, Grizzly Sam; and if I didn't know you for a good and faithful servant to the firm, and one that would give your heart's blood for Saul Deth, and your little finger to see Solomon Weevil hanged, I—I—I'd fight you, by gum!" Simnel Coxworthy concluded with the most valorous look he was capable of assuming.

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"There; I know you are honest enough, Simnel," grumbled Grizzly Sam. "I'd have had you trundled neck and crop out of this warehouse long ago, if I'd thought you capable of pouching so much as a tobacconist's token. But you knew of the thing. Why do you come breaking the Sabbath and knocking down believers' doors to bid 'em shut the stable when the steed's stolen?"

"I was aware of the thing only an hour since. You know that Saul Deth often allows me to make a little overtime by sorting and docketing papers after business hours on Saturday night. Between you and me and the post, I don't trouble ink and crowquill much on Saturdays. There are some brave boys at the Stingo club who would call me lily-livered if I did; but on Sunday forenoons I often have the papers out, and hum over the dry old pounds, shillings, and pence canticles."

"I know you are a young heathen," muttered the porter. "What more?"

"Last night it rained in torrents. I had lost a crown-bowl of punch to Tim Latitat, the 'Sizes lawyer's clerk, and being somewhat short of cash—quarter day's so long in coming round—I didn't care about going to the Stingo club."

"Dishonesty is punch-drinking's second whelp, and many a time has the Stingo led to the Bridewell and the Tolzey. I know you are a good hand at spending your money faster than you get it. Go on."

"I lit the candle in my lodging-room, and made an effort to get through some work; but I felt dead

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sleepy, and after a pipe of tobacco and a posset went to bed."

"Smoking's on the high road to ruin," Grizzly Sam remarked, omitting however to mention whither quid-chewing led. "A fine story about a cock and a bull; what else?"

"I was up by daylight this morning, and went to work in earnest. Between two invoices I found this letter, unsealed and undirected, in the handwriting of Solomon Weevil, which I suppose he wrote last night in the counting-room, intending to take it away with him, and which he must have left behind him by mistake, substituting some other for it, among the papers which he knew I was to take home. Naturally I opened it; accidentally, I began to read it. It was no hanging matter to have read it through."

As he spoke he produced a letter from his vest, —a letter written in a dainty Italian hand, and with the most elegant upstrokes,—and handed it to Sam. But the porter averted his head, and waved the clerk back.

"Read it," he said, in a husky voice. "Read the smooth wolf's words. As you've read it once, read it again. I'm a God-fearing man, but no scholar. Print I'm good at, but I can't master Solomon Weevil's spider-legged words. Read the letter, Simnel Coxworthy."

The clerk cleared his voice, and read hurriedly, as follows:—

"Before this comes to hand I shall be away. I am tired of playing the Puritan any longer. I

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want the blue sea, and the hot sun, and my free companions again. Had you a spark of gallant bearing in you, I would have taken you with me in the *Black Harry;* but you will never be aught more than a cry-baby, and you had best go home to your sister and your sister's husband. Take care of Saul Deth. Comfort that precious child of grace; for I have laid hands on all the money-bags—yea, the pieces of gold and the pieces of silver in our strong box; and ere he returns from Bartle Ferry, the good stuff will all be safe in the *Black Harry's* main cabin. I have thirty-six hours' start, and the *Black Harry* can show a clean pair of heels to the swiftest King's ship that was ever built in Deptford Yard. God be with ye, wife. 'Tis not thy fault that thou art a milksop. God save King James and his Holiness the Pope. Let the Hanover rat Deth know that his partner has been a Jacobite and a Papist all along. My wig goes into the sea, and my loyalty and piety along with it. Bid Saul Deth know that I wish him joy of the drafts of exchange he hath to take up on Monday. And so no more from him who was once

"SOLOMON WEEVIL, and thy loving husband.
"For Mistress Prudence Weevil, in town."

"The sneaking, lubberly, piratical fiend," exclaimed Grizzly Sam, snatching this cool epistle from the clerk, crumpling it, in his rage, in his hand, and then dashing it to the floor. "Oh! that I had known this two hours agone. Not all the willing winds in the world should have blown the

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Black Harry out of my reach. I'd have boarded her in a gale as hard as that which drowned Sir Cloudesley Shovel and all hands off the Scillys. I'd have had every penny of the money out of the villain's grip before I was half-an-hour older, or my name isn't Grizzly Sam Loveday."

"The worst is not told," the clerk resumed, with melancholy gravity. "Twenty thousand pounds is a mighty sum. You know that Saul Deth holds not with the Merchant Adventurers' Bank, and allows no goldsmith to keep his cash. What other moneys the firm may possess are out at mortgage, and cannot be had at call; let alone riches that are on the sea, and in the ships of those that go down to it. The house is ruined body and bones. There were drafts due on Friday. The three days of grace have reached expiry, and as soon as the "Angel and Compasses" opens its doors to-morrow morning, those drafts will be presented. Where is the cash to meet them? Where will be the credit for punctuality which Saul Deth, if he ever could rejoice, rejoiced in? Said I not truly that this was ruin?"

"Body o' me!" cried the porter. "But we have stock in hand. Look around, man!"

"All belongs to the bankrupts' creditors. It's a hanging matter to touch a penny's worth of them."

"But we have treasures, as thou sayest, on the salt sea. The *Righteous Endeavour*, with gold-dust and elephants' teeth, is overdue, and before dusk may be sighted in the offing. Never a money-monger in Longport but would advance twenty thousand on the security of that rich cargo. I

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will hie me at once to Zachary Pounce, of Milk-and-Honey-lane, or Ishmael Ferrit, of Trumpington-street."

"Put not thy faith in princes," the clerk said, sanctimoniously, "nor thy trust in steeds that prance, nor in ships that sail, nor yet in the kind-heartedness of men of money. To thee, as to Saul Deth, both Zachary Pounce and Ishmael Ferrit would say a scornful nay. Things are worse even than you think, Grizzly Sam," he continued, in a desponding tone. "I have been down to the King's jetty, and have heard evil news."

"What news, raven of ill-tidings?"

"The boatmen were whispering; for the pilot-boat *Caroline* had come in. The boatmen were whispering; for the news is that the good ship *Righteous Endeavour* went down last night off Peartall Point. She struck on the dismal rock; she broke her back on the Craggy Millstones, in sight of the *Caroline's* crew. She went down, and there is nothing saved: nor hands, nor cargo."

"And I stand idling here, wasting my time, while my good master's fortune and honour are in peril," the porter cried out in a fury. "Death o' my life, Simnel Coxworthy, you mean well, but your long tongue gives rogues rope. I must away! away!" he continued, casting his eyes about, as though in quest of some weapon.

"And whither away?" asked Simnel Coxworthy, who, now that his tale was ended, and the worst, as he thought, revealed, subsided into a state of philosophic equanimity. "Whither away?" he repeated,

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picking up the ill-omened letter which Grizzly Sam had cast from him, and smoothing it on his knee.

"Whither?—to catch the *Black Harry* and Solomon Weevil, to tear his heart out, to throttle that filibuster Stoneyard," the porter cried. "I'll have the man and the money back, and the buccaneer hanged at the yard-arm of the *Minden*, if I die for it."

"You must be mad. She is the fastest sailer between here and the Thames. You can scarcely see her rakish top-masts now. She will round Peartall Point in a trice of hours. She'll laugh the Craggy Millstones to scorn. Her captain and her passengers were never born to be drowned. Look at that black cloud, no bigger than one's hand, to the southward. I tell you that before we are two hours older there will be a hurricane, and it will blow great guns. No; the *Black Harry* wont put back. Her captain is too clever; she runs too great a risk for *that*. But mark me, Sam Loveday, if you find any madman from the Ferry to the Point, to put to sea with you in such weather, and on such a wild-goose chase, you'll be capsized and drowned."

"I care not!" the porter replied, snatching up a stout oaken staff that lay in a corner, "I'm an old sailor. I've braved danger and death in a thousand shapes before, and I'll brave them again to serve my good master. I'd brave the devil to beard his twin-brother, Solomon Weevil. Stay me not! Hinder me not! I'm not to be trifled with, I tell you. Stop you here, and mind the warehouse. If you stir a peg, I'll cudgel your carcase to a mummy

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when I come back. And Heaven defend the right, and keep me to save Saul Deth and hang Solomon Weevil as high as Jonathan Wild."

So saying, Sam Loveday thrust the astonished clerk on to a bale of dry goods, rather than invited him to take a seat thereon—shouldered his staff—made for the door—opened it; but, pausing on the threshold, turned his sun-burnt visage towards his companion, and, with a very rueful expression, grumbled—

"I know it ain't righteous, but it must be done." Then he disappeared, slamming the door behind him, and Simnel Coxworthy was left alone.

"It's all very fine," this young gentleman soliloquised, "saying 'Stop here, and don't stir;' but I should like to know what becomes of my Sunday holiday, and Sally Danks, the parlour-maid at the sign of the 'Mortal Man.' As for the cudgelling, two can play at that game, Master Loveday. The best hand at quarterstaff of the whole Stingo Club, is surely a match for an old wooden-legged sea-grampus. And there's such things as headboroughs and constables, and swearing the peace against brawlers and back-scourers. I'm not going to stop in this pestilent old vault, full of cheeses and butter firkins. I'd as soon lay in the Little Ease of the Tolzey."

The Tolzey was not only a madhouse, but the House of Correction of Longport, whither refractory apprentices and rebellious servants were taken to do penance; and where naughty damsels received the "civility of the house" in the shape of stripes, and,

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being well beaten, afterwards beat hemp themselves for their sins.

"I'm sorry for the 'Angel and Compasses,' the clerk continued, half aloud; "sorry for the Firm of Deth and Weevil; sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for Saul Deth, who, for all his sour phiz, is a good man and true; but I'm not going to be turned into a night watchman. It isn't in my agreement. I'm a clerk, not a porter. It's no business of mine to frighten rats, and keep off robbers. I wouldn't do it for five hundred a year, and Christmas boxes once a month. The 'Angel and Compasses' must take care of itself. I'll see all bolted and barred up, save the front door, and that I'll lock securely, and be here the first thing in the morning. There's nothing to be done, so far as I can see. I can't fish up the *Righteous Endeavour*, or bring Solomon Weevil back, or coin twenty thousand pounds out of those rum puncheons and tarry ropes, to meet those drafts withal, by stopping here. I can't borrow any money to help the Firm withal. I hope the creditors will be easy with Saul Deth; perhaps they'll say it's all a made up thing between him and Solomon Weevil, and he'll be had to the Tolzey, and before the Mayor, and tried at 'sizes for it, and sent to the Plantations for it. As for Solomon Weevil, he's more than half filibuster already, I'll be bound, and knows more about the black flag than Manchester calicoes; and if a king's ship doesn't bring him home some day in the bilboes to make a scarecrow at Execution Dock, I'm a Dutchman. Hallo! what's that?"

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He started, and uttered this last exclamation aloud, as at the closed, but now unbarred door, there came another knocking. But it was not a violent series of verberations, such as his own summons for admission had been, but a succession of low and discreet taps; and as he bent his head and inclined his ear to listen, he thought he heard cautious coughs alternating with the taps, as though in pursuance of some preconcerted signal.

"More mischief afloat," the clerk said, testily. "It can't be Grizzly Sam; he knows the door's unfastened. Perhaps it's Solomon Weevil come back to see if he can steal anything else. At all events we'll see."

He put the chain up before he opened the door; a measure of precaution; for the police of Longport was so defective as almost not to exist. Watchmen with cutlasses and blunderbusses guarded the warehouses out of business hours; and the town was by no means free of sundry gentry known as cope-men, scuffle-hunters, and other roaming desperadoes, who, being amphibious, occasionally abandoned salt-water thievery for taking their walks abroad on dry land, seeking what they might devour in the way of ill-defended shops and dwelling-houses.

"Who's there?" cried the clerk, across the chain and through the embrasure of the partially-opened door.

There was nothing to be frightened at; only a plump rosy little man with a very shiny countenance, and a handsome livery, something between that of a

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serving-man and a huntsman; for he wore a scarlet jerkin, with narrow gold edging, a black velvet jockey cap, leathern overalls, boots and spatterdashes, and carried a buckhandled whip with a formidable thong. He was quite clean shaven, but looked some fifty years of age.

"Why, it's Tom Jowler, from Claryon Pleasant," Simnel exclaimed. "What can Sir Roger Claryon's huntsman want at this hour? Hounds don't find on Sunday. But come in, Tom; and how is Sir Roger? and surely you don't want a new thong for your whip, or a pot of golden salve for Diana the brach's fore foot?"

"By your leafs, by your leafs," made answer the rosy little man, who was a Welchman, and an ancient servitor of Sir Roger Claryon, the proud Tory; and, if folks were to be believed, Jacobite baronet of Claryon Pleasant, some five miles from Longport, on the Westchester road. "By your leafs, I cannot ket in till the shains is lowert. There, it is town, and I thank you kindly. Put it is of Mistress Teth I would haf speeches, good Master writing-man."

"The Madam," replied Simnel, somewhat sulkily, for his dignity was nettled at being called a "writing-man." "The Madam, goodman dog-slasher, is not at home. For a world's wonder, she has accompanied her husband to Bartle Ferry for the day and night, instead of remaining, as is her wont, in her private chamber in the dwelling-house adjoining this warehouse. The porter I have dispatched on private concernments of my own," he added, with

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more dignity than veracity; "and of my own will I am remaining here. May I ask what you need in your hedge-scouring array this blessed day, Master finder of vermin? We are no fox-hunters, nor Jacobites, nor Papishes, for the matter of that, at the 'Angel and Compasses.'"

"You are a limper-tonkued knafe—," the irascible little Cambro-Briton began to retort; when—a wonderful thing for a Welshman—he checked himself and continued—

"I pray you to let me have speeches of Mistress Teth. Dit not my young master, that is Squire Edwart, tell me she was sure to pe to home, ant, inteet, had promis't him to keep in her champer all tay?"

"I know nothing of words and promises, or of ship-chandlers' dames, who make them with the ne'er-do-well sons of cockfighting baronets," the clerk answered, disdainfully. "I only know that, by rare chance, Madam Deth accompanied her husband to Bartle Ferry."

"You scaltheatet maccot—" the huntsman began again, looking, moreover, as though he were possessed by an intense desire to lay the thong of his buck-handled whip about the shoulders of Simnel Coxworthy. But again he mastered himself, muttering that the young Squire had bidden him join in no "prapples," and avoid drinking dry with any man, and asked, civilly enough, who, then, was to give him an answer to the letter he brought.

"I can answer it; although the day be a blessed

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one, and a *dies non*," Simnel answered, loftily, "if it be aught on merchant's business."

"It is nothin' to to with your merchants and thinks," replied the huntsman, impatiently. "It is not your pusiness nor my pusiness. It is from young Squire Claryon, and to pe kifen into Mistress Teth's own hants, or her waitink-woman's; and to pe taken pack to Claryon-Pleasant, without drawing rein."

"In that case, Thomas Jowler," observed Simnel, "the best thing you can do with it, is to leave it here; and Madam Deth will get it early tomorrow morning. As for Margaret Chatterton, the waiting-woman, she has, as all hard-worked servitors should have, her holiday, and is pursuing her devotions at the Spring Chocolate House, by Marley Beeches." He sighed as he spoke, thinking, doubtless, of Sally Danks, the keeping-room maid at the "Mortal Man," who had promised to accompany him, in her new flowered tiffany and lace lappets, on this very Sunday, to the suburban Chocolate House just alluded to.

"Then a' cootness names," the huntsman said, "take the letter, and coot rittance of it. I know nothing of women's whimwhams, and my jerkin has no pockets for letters. And coot Mr. Clerk Simnel, if your head has a crown as cool as my throat is dry, Tom Jowler will show you that he pears no malice, and is no Jacopite and no Papish, and will trink the health of Kink Shorge, and the Lord Bishops of Westchester's, and all the Royal Family's into te pargain."

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There was a malicious and almost irresistible impulse in Simnel's mind to tell the Welshman, that if he needed any refreshment, there was plenty of good cheese about, which he might toast and eat, according to the custom of his country; but on second thoughts he remembered that the huntsman had a hot temper, and a lithe arm, and a tough, pliant weapon of offence at his command; so, mustering the best grace he could command, he opened the door of a closet, took forth a sample flask of ship's rum, poured out a measure therefrom, and handed it to the huntsman, who tossed off the dram with a countenance expressive of much contentment, smacking his lips, but omitting to accompany his libation by any royal or episcopal healths. Perhaps his memory was short, or he drank his toasts mentally. Simnel Coxworthy did not care to question him; but merely moistening his lips from another glass, and making a grave inclination of his head to Sir Roger Claryon's huntsman, pretended to be absorbed in the perusal of an almanac, till Mr. Jowler seeing no more ship's rum in the offing, intimated that he would "co pack to the Piple and Crown" (a hostelry notorious for its Jacobite leanings), where his horse was at bait; and making a scraping movement with his left leg, that might have been intended for a bow, but looked far more like a preparatory *pas* for a kick, departed. Then Simnel Coxworthy arose, put up the chain again, and fell into very deep cogitation.

"It's not his fault, and it's not my fault," he mused, "but Saul Deth and I must part company.

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I'm not his body-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass; and clerk's business is not to be in the counting-room on Sundays. As Grizzly Sam says, it ain't righteous. I wont have anything to do with this letter. I've had enough of letters for one day. Weevil's I am bound to keep until I can deliver it into the hands of Saul Deth; but with this scribble of the young Squire's I'll not meddle. If Margery Chatterton was here I'd give it her; but she isn't. Shall I strive to find her at the Chocolate House? No! 'tis no business of mine. I'll be no go-between; and that confounded young whelp of the Jacobitical crew at Claryon Pleasant nearly rode over me the other day in Hog-lane, and then bade me get out of the way for a blockhead. Your servant, Squire Edward; the letter may lie here, and take its chance."

So thinking and speaking, Simnel Coxworthy walked slowly to the glass-sided counting-room at the back of the warehouse, and laid the letter, not without some inward prickings of conscience, that told him he was doing a shabby thing, on the desk. Saul Deth would be sure to see it; but then he was a fond and indulgent husband. He never opened his wife's letters. Coxworthy had seen her break the seals of packets addressed to herself scores and scores of times. Besides, the Madam was always down very early in the morning, to see that the 'prentice lads had swept out the warehouse and counting-room. He would have nothing to do with the letter; the memory of the young Squire and

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his uncivil behaviour in Hog-lane still rankled in his breast, and he let the letter lie.

Again, with more uneasy mutterings and twitchings, and considerable perturbation in his countenance, Simnel Coxworthy went next to his own private desk; and opening the leaf, proceeded to make a neat parcel of his own private ruler, his inkhorn and penholder, his almanac and ready reckoner, and his volume of the "Thrush"—a collection of loyal, convivial, and amorous songs, which he was in the habit of surreptitiously studying, when business was slack, and the ship-chandlers were not in the way; to these he added the black calico sleeves in which he wrote, to avoid soiling or staining his camlet cuffs with ink or friction, and the snowy white apron which—oh, shame that it should be told!—the book-keeper to a ship-chandler was, a hundred years ago, expected to wear. This parcel, having tied it up in most symmetrical fashion, he slowly insinuated into a pocket of his camlet coat, and buttoning that garment to the neck, took one final glance around at the barrels and the bales he had entered and invoiced so long and so well.

"It's like leaving home," he murmured, in a disconsolate manner; "but what is one to do? In these latter days, every one must take care of himself. Where's the use of being clerk to a ship-chandler when he's gone bankrupt? Mine is a quarterly hiring, and my quarter is out to-morrow. Anything I can do towards balancing the books I shall be happy to do if I'm sent for. Saul Deth

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must give me a character; and, doubtless, I shall get another place at Pigg and Tubswell's, in Hog-lane; or at Scratchit' and Daw's. Who knows but that rich Sir Mordecai Muscovado, of Sugar-loaf-buildings, may find a place in his counting-room for Sim Coxworthy? But ten days since I saw him on 'Change, and he bade me go hang for a young rascal. Sir Mordecai never forgets any one he has once seen; so fortune take thy course, and 'Angel and Compasses' farewell."

The rats forsake the falling house—the leaking ship; the Thanes fled from the beleaguered Scottish King; and the courtiers, "with a noise like thunder," abandoned the death-bed of Louis the Well-Beloved, to pay homage to his heir. Simnel Coxworthy's suit and service were at an end. He had no more constancy and devotion than nine-tenths of his fellow-men; so he went out into the Trinidad Piazzas, locked the front door carefully after him, proposing to send the key per messenger in the morning, and so left the "Angel and Compasses" to darkness and desolation. He was very merry that afternoon at the Chocolate House, and treated Sally Danks, some time keeping-room maid at the sign of the "Mortal Man," to burnt sherry and ratafias.

It seemed destined on this given Sunday that the Trinidad Piazzas were not to enjoy their wonted Sabbath quietude. Usually, not so much as a dog's small paws pattered over those white and grey flags, or the uncertain footsteps of a mariner overtaken in ship's rum woke up fitful echoes from the arching

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roof. But noon had scarcely struck from Saint Waltheof's high church-steeple before sounds and noises began to fright the Piazzas from their propriety. There was the sound of the mighty wind, which, lashing the waters of the Swarl into foam, and buffeting barges against barks, and barks against the quay side, and whistling among thickly inlaced rigging, and bending tall masts like riding-wands, swept filth, dry rubbish, and pebbles into the Piazzas, and sent them eddying over the flags with sharp cracking noise. Then came the hail in quick peremptory patterings. Then the wind howled and shook the sign of the "Angel and Compasses" in its iron frame, and the door on its hinges, and the shutters in their bars, till they all clattered again; and the stout oaken pillars that supported the Piazzas creaked and groaned in obstinate but angry endurance. And then the rain, in sidelong sheets, swept against the closed windows, and the fury of the Storm was at its height.

Saul Deth and Patience his wife, coming from Bartle Ferry in the "Surprise" hoy, had a narrow escape of their lives. It was not without difficulty, and without disbursing twenty silver shillings, that the ship-chandler had prevailed on John Talkman, sometimes called "Ebony Jack," skipper of the "Surprise," to hoist his sail and stand across for Longport. There was "mischief in the morning," Ebony Jack said, shaking his shock pow. And black as was the sky, and evilly as the wind whistled at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, there was more mischief, Saul Deth thought, in undertaking

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any journey whatsoever on such a day of the week. He had been well-nigh forced in returning to Longport by the persistent and passionate entreaties of his wife. He reproached himself now, that he had himself, the previous afternoon, done violence to her inclination; and put forth his rarely-exercised marital authority; and had sternly insisted that she should accompany him to Bartle Ferry. This was a pretty seaside hamlet, just below the light-house, and here Saul Deth had a cottage, of which, during the week, an ancient serving-woman took care, and which was close adjacent to the meeting-house of his persuasion. Rarely, if ever, did Mistress Deth accompany him to this Sabbath retirement, or join with him in the devotional exercises and austere repose in which the day was passed. His usual custom was to proceed alone to the Ferry. His young wife remained with her waiting-woman in the dwelling-house in the Piazzas, received a few friends to a quiet tea-drinking, or else went out in her rich but demure Sunday best to visit some of her female acquaintances. But on the Saturday afternoon preceding the commencement of this narrative, Saul Deth had been, he scarcely could tell himself the reason why, inflexible in commanding the presence of his wife at Bartle Ferry. "It was not seemly, it was not righteous," he said, "that man and wife should thus be put asunder on the Sabbath Day, when they should most properly join in exercises of grace and atonement." His brethren had noted her abstention. The elders of the congregation had remonstrated with him on the subject.

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If the scandal were not removed he would be publicly convened and reprimanded. The vanities of this world must be checked. It was his duty to rule his household, and his wife's to leave the tattling of silly women, and cleave to her husband. He would hear no excuses, and she should go.

She went, complaining, pouting, and well-nigh sobbing; for the young woman wedded to the stern, ascetic ship-chandler was little more than a child. She wept almost the entire night through, and would not be comforted. She refused food or refreshment of any kind, and went so far as to call her husband "brute," "tyrant," and "barbarian Turk." If Saul Deth had acted strictly in accordance with the received discipline of his persuasion, or had he followed the advice of the rigorous elders, from whom he sometimes took counsel, he would have confined his wayward wife to her chamber, or, in moderation, have inflicted such wholesome chastisement upon her, as was warranted by the exigency of the case. But as he loved this young woman with an exceeding and tender fondness, and was given to regard her, at most times, as the apple of his eye and the breath of his life—an excess of uxoriousness which he did *not* confess to the rigorous elders,—he ceded next morning to her importunities, and, half pleased and half ashamed, agreed to ascribe her wish to return to Longport to one of the unaccountable but ungovernable caprices of womankind, and so kissed her, bade her be of good heart, for that she should have her desire; and, as we have seen, incited the skipper of the "Surprise"

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hoy to cross the troubled estuary on a Sunday morning.

Patience Deth would not have been a woman—far less a young and pretty one—if, having gained signal advantage, she did not make the most of it, and seek to convert it into a precedent for further demands. Her husband, for the first time in their married life, had treated her with severity. He had retracted and made amends, but she did not forgive him, even although his harsh purpose had been but half accomplished. Thus, throughout the passage from the Ferry she pettishly repulsed his caresses and kind words, and pleading, not without acrimony of tone, that she had a headache and desired to be left in peace, huddled her calash over her head, and sat as far away from him as the limited space permitted, like a pretty, mutinous child. The chip-chandler was fain to resign himself to this feminine obduracy; and so kept a very staid, dolorous countenance, until the hoy, after an hour and a half's beating about, touched the King's jetty at Longport. Saul Deth paid the skipper the fee he had promised him, and the ebon mariner, leaving Tongo, his negro cabin-lad, in charge of the hoy, and binding himself by solemn asseveration to skin him alive and then pickle him, if he did not keep a sharp look-out for wherries that had broken loose from their moorings, and that might bump against the "Surprise," betook himself, with Pete, nicknamed "Hardhead," his mate, and Towchops, sometimes called "Gunpowder Tom," his best man, to the tavern known as the "Three Mugs," where he

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ordered a bowl of punch, and royally treated his subordinates till long after—in defiance of all municipal byelaws and tippling acts notwithstanding—the bells had rung for afternoon service.

The wind and rain were doing their worst when Saul Deth's foot touched the quay flags. He had a heavy boat cloak with him, the which he tried hard to persuade his wife to be allowed to wrap round her; but she, though by this time in a fair way of being drenched to the skin, and shivering besides in every limb, would only sob and ejaculate, "Take me home! take me home!"

The Trinidad Piazzas were not five minutes' walk from the jetty, and the sober, snugly-furnished dwelling of Saul Deth was next door to his warehouse, forming, however, a perfectly independent tenement. The low-groined roof of the Piazzas soon sheltered the ship-chandler and his wife from the soaking rain. Then Saul, taking his great house-key from its shagreen case, opened the dwelling-house door, almost glad that the inclemency of the weather had prevented his being seen by his neighbours, thus frivolously going to and fro on the Sabbath Day.

He had been seen, nevertheless. Old Croons, the boatman; Thumb, the pilot; Coombings, the oldest of Longport mariners, who declared, though nobody believed him, that he had served under Benbow, were smoking under the sail-shed on the jetty when he landed.

"Dirty weather," quoth Croons; "will the 'Black Harry' put back, think you?"

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"Put back" echoed Thumb the Pilot; "she'd ride out Noah's ark, when she's upon the Devil's errands, as I'll be sworn she is this present Sunday. But hither comes Saul Deth, the ship-chandler, and the fine madam his wife."

"A grim-faced lubber!" wheezed out the ancient man who said that he had served under Benbow; "but Mistress Deth is a kind soul. She gave me a crown not later than Monday fourteen days to drink Church and King. I warrant the chuff, her husband, drinks nought but healths to calves' head and conventicle in small beer."

"Small beer! bilge-water, you mean!" grumbled Croons. "Did he not say, when he took boat on Saturday, and I was far gone, fuddled, that if he were justice of peace he would have me in the stocks for a toper. See how glum the old nipcheese looks. Has he heard the news, think you, messmates?"

"Of the 'Righteous Endeavour' being down among the sand and shells of Davy Jones's locker? No," answered Coombings. "How should he? Didn't he cross to the Ferry last even? 'Tis a black job for him; and as for her, pure heart, I pity her."

"Shall we make bold to touch our hats and tell him of the ill-report of brother Coombings?" asked Thumb the pilot.

"Heaven forbid!" the ancient man answered solemnly. "Ill news travels fast enough, brother Thumb; and Saul Deth won't be many hours older ere he hears of the loss of the 'Righteous Endeavour.'"

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The ship-chandler passed close to him as he uttered the name of the ill-fated vessel, and it is almost a wonder that Saul did not hear it. But the obstinacy of his wife pre-occupied him, and lay heavy on his mind, and he passed on.

CHAPTER III.

EVIL UPON EVIL.

SAUL DETH went into his counting-room, and sitting down at his accustomed desk, rested his head wearily on his hand. The Sabbath had never brought joys or cheerfulness to him. He had looked at it through a dark veil, and drawn a cypress over it. The stern creed he professed made it ever a bitter and rueful round of hours, devoted to monotonous exercises and grim contemplation; yet gloomy as was its unvarying recurrence, with its sermons, exhortations, spiritual exercitations, self-examinations, and long-drawn psalmody, the periodical journey to Bartle Ferry—the very change of faces, and houses, and atmosphere—made it a season of relief, if not of relaxation. He would have shuddered, and deemed himself guilty of a sin, if the fact that he, too, in obedience to the great law of nature, was in the habit of making holiday on the Seventh Day, had suddenly presented itself to him; yet there came over him a kind of half-consciousness that this was a sadder, sterner

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Sunday than ordinary, when he found himself sitting in the solitary, silent counting-room—seeming more silent in its interior, and that of the adjoining warehouse, by the howling of the storm without. From the heart-shaped apertures in the shutters no bright sun-rays streamed, but only such faded threads of reflected light as could filter through the serried timbers of the Piazza that half hid the frontage to the premises of Deth and Weevil. The light, meagre as it was, came in timidly and furtively; just tipped sparse bands and rings and bosses of metal-work; just lingered in a dubious manner on bales and barrels, but was ever vanquished, and driven into nothingness before the quickly-darkening shadows. Through the dim-paned windows of the counting-room Saul Deth peered at last into an abyss of murky indistinctness, through which those same heart-shaped Judas-holes in the shutters loomed like eyes. Now violent gusts from without would shake the shutters and the door itself, making the staples groan, and the chain rattle against panel and jamb; and the wet wind would force itself under the lintel and over the threshold, and send tiny sprays of mud splashing over the floor, till they found inequalities in the planking, and formed shallow puddles. A rat came out of his hiding-place and pattered to the counting-room door, and looked with his red eyes at Saul Deth. Behind the ship-chandler was another window, with dingy bull's-eyed panes, heavily bolted and barred across, and looking into a narrow yard between high walls: an unroofed dungeon, indeed,

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it looked; where, from the confined space and the lack of drainage a hundred years ago, the rain had it all its own way, lashing the bull's-eyed panes, surging against the ashlar of the strong walls, floating the shavings and rubbish of hoop-staves, sacking, and matting that had been cast into the yard, and plashing furiously in an old broken barrel.

The Ship-Chandler, moody and pre-occupied, brooded on his high stool; his eye wandering heavily, almost mechanically, round his counting-room. Everything wore its dull, methodical, accustomed air. There was the almanac; there, the ready-reckoner; the King's assize proclamation against vice, profaneness, and immorality; the list of ships expected during the current month—the "Righteous Endeavour" conspicuous among them—pasted on the walls. There was the strong oaken chest, heavily clamped with iron, screwed to the floor, and defended by two locks besides a heavy staple and padlock—the chest that held the most important papers of the House, and in many instances most of their current cash. That chest would have to be opened on the morrow, the Ship-Chandler reminded himself, to pay the drafts of exchange which would be presented. He kept one set of keys to this precious coffer; the other set remained with his trustworthy partner. There was the great table-desk, with its lofty legs and cross-bars, and brass scaffolding to rest heavy books upon; the steep stools for Solomon Weevil, for himself, for Simnel Coxworthy, and for old Myttens, the accountant, who was nearly eighty now, well-

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nigh blind, and semi-palsied, but who had served Saul Deth's father before him, and was not to be cast off like a worn-out garment,—but, with a comfortable wage for his subsistence, was permitted to dodder about books and accounts of no great moment to the working business of the Firm, — to scold Simnel, and his masters too, sometimes, in his thin querulous pipe,—and to come and go when he almost listed. Black ink and red ink, pounce, wafers, wax, pens, seals, imbibing-paper, rulers, files, were all there; pegs for hats, shelves and hooks, pigeon-holes full of samples of sugar, of rice, tobacco, coffee, and the like: all the dull paraphernalia of a trader's elaboratory. And Saul Deth looked at all, his eyes ever moodily wandering, his finger nails tapping a nervous tattoo on the dark mahogany — polished only by scribblers' arms, stained only by ink splashes—of the desk.

It was the wholesome custom (but one, nevertheless, that may be perverted by excess) of this man to arraign himself secretly, to prefer evidence against himself, to sum up the case in his disfavour inexorably, to pass stern judgment and swift condemnation on his sins, both of omission and commission. He began bitterly to reproach himself with having neglected his accustomed devotional duties for the day. He groaned in the spirit that he should have ceded to the pettish caprice of a wilful woman. "Uxoriousness! uxoriousness!" he murmured; "how the flesh works,—how the carnal becomes triumphant,—how Satan halloos out for joy at the soul's backslidings, — how righteousness is cast

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under foot and trampled on! I should have reasoned with this perverse but comely creature. I should have withstood her instances, have gainsaid her whim, checked her disobedience; nay, have gone to the utmost tether of sharp and bitter remedies, even to sequestration in her chamber, or to the correction of stripes, ere I permitted her to ride roughshod over duty and conscience and direct precept. Oh! I have been weak! I have been weak!"

So he pondered—revolving in his mind, seeking for consolation, but finding little in the rigid tenets of his creed. Moral and adamic law, justification, sanctification, instantaneous deliverance, inward evidences, chains of agencies, perpetuity of revelation, witness of the Spirit, moral miracles, possible perfection,—he took counsel of each particular section in his confession of faith; but he could arrive at no conclusion, save that he was of the world and worldly, and that he had bartered his inward consciousness of rectitude and purity for a glittering and perishable bauble. That pretty, rosy face his soul had feasted upon would one day become faded and wrinkled; that melodious voice would be cracked and feeble; those soft and supple limbs would be shrunken and shrivelled; those silken tresses would fall off, or become grey; that mortal was but dust, and must return thereto. He remembered that when he had first thought of marriage, he had held grave converse and consultation with the elders of the congregation, and that they had earnestly and almost vehemently dissuaded him from

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entering into the state of wedlock. "Saul Deth," had righteous Mr. Elkanah Toplady—one who had suffered bitter persecution in his time from rulers and governors—said to him, "thou seest yonder three years' old child, mumbling and sucking the sweetmeat his nurse has given him. Behold! in an instant it will be gone, and the babe will wail for more. But thou seest yon stout and brawny peasant man, the digger and delver of the soil. Behold! his labour is over. He has had his hire; he has bought bread, and sits in the shade eating it in peace and thankfulness. Wilt thou sooner have Bread of Life, that shall not die, but lives again in the strength and courage to do more labour in the field, or wilt thou fill thyself with comfits and conserves that shall be sweet to the tooth, but to the belly bitter for ever? Come into the field where the labourers are few, but the reward is rich, and leave this pink-skinned puppet for children to play with." Thus Elder Toplady;—and thus Saul Deth, in his inward soul confessed that, were he aught but a wavering reed, he should do; but the sweet voice and the pink skin and lithe movements vanquished him. The little fingers knitted silken chains that bound him in bonds firmer than all the rusted shackles in the Tolzey. No benighted negro man, no white castaway, was ever so hopelessly kidnapped and borne away to plantations remote from righteousness and its hills and vales. Saul Deth bade conscience—or, at least, his idea of what conscience should be—remain quiescent. He listened reverentially to the Elders, to sour-faced

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friends, to ancient dames of an ascetic frame of mind, who, warped and disappointed themselves, bade him expect no present happiness, no future felicity from wedded life. He took counsel of his desires, and made the hankering of his heart his guide and teacher. He hesitated, and was married.

Patience Sievewright had nor gold nor silver, but her family was ancient, and of an honourable descent. Her fore-elders had been cavaliers and king's men in the great troubles of the preceding century. Her great-grandfather, even, had been knighted by King Charles, for gallant suit and service done with Prince Rupert's troopers. Her father had been a captain of horse in the wars of George the Second; but had gone over to the Jacobite side in the forty-five; had fought at Culloden with the Scottish clans; and, if truth must be told, had only escaped an untimely end by halter, head-shearing, and limb-quartering on Kennington Common by a timely flitting to the territories of the French King, where, in Paris, for some time, he earned a meagre sustenance as a kind of rough-rider and equerry—a knowledge of horses was hereditary in the Sievewright family—in the stables of the Duke of Clermont Tonnerre. But falling into evil ways, and having always had a pernicious leaning towards dicing, brawling, drinking of strong waters, and other iniquities, he declined into a mere yeomen-pricker, horse-couper, and, indeed, it was whispered, common cheat and cozener; and, after narrowly escaping the galleys for counterfeiting of livre-pieces, died very miserably in a French provincial gaol. He had been a West-

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chester man, and left there, at the time of his flight, a family of three children. His son, Loyal Sievewright, so christened in contempt of the Hanoverian faction, evinced in youth so marked a predilection for cock-fighting, prize-fighting, horse jockeying, and peaceable-citizens-heads-in-taverns breaking, that, after innumerable articles of the peace had been exhibited against him, he was constrained (in order to avoid worse things) to enlist in a regiment of foot, and made a sufficiently good end of it—carrying a sergeant's halbert in that heroic charge of the heights of Abraham, in Canada, under the immortal general, James Wolfe. His poor mother, with her two portionless daughters, Patience and Prudence, remained at Westchester, keeping a small school for their livelihood; but removing presently to Bartle Ferry, and finding that no good had resulted from the Jacobite and High Church politics of the males of the family, they became exceedingly loyal to the reigning family—for the ladies were all politicians in those days—and became sedulous attendants at the chapel, class and prayer meetings, anxious holdings, and harmony-feasts of the congregation in which Saul Deth was a shining light. It is needless to tell how the stern, shy, retiring, and almost deformed Ship-Chandler became enamoured of the rosy, merry, bright-eyed Patience Sievewright; nor is it essential to tell what lures and coils the girl, or more probably her mother, employed to attract this rich and reputable man. He, his ears quite deafened by the delightful buzzings of Love, never listened to some malicious

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whispers that were afloat, setting forth how pretty Patience Sievewright was an experienced and incorrigible coquette; how she had toyed with and broken the hearts of many men in her brief girlhood—beguiling and enticing, only to cast them off with scorn and contumely; and how, worse than all, there had been some love-passages of years' standing between her and the young Squire Claryon, who had known Loyal Sievewright, the graceless brother, well, and had caroused and fought mains of cocks and dice with him often. Saul Deth knew or would know nothing of all this; nor of the pretty closely accredited rumour that Edward Claryon had been within an ace of making a stolen match with the penniless Patience Sievewright, but that Sir Roger had heard of it in time, and in a fury packed his son off to Leyden to study law; commanding him, under pain of disinherison, on his return, to unite himself to the bride he, Sir Roger, had chosen for him. His destined wife was Miss Betsy Delascore, daughter of Delascore of the Grange, a neighbouring squire, justice, and Jacobite, and with fifteen thousand pounds to her fortune.

Not any more—so deafened and blinded was he by an overweening love—did Saul Deth, when he was married, and when Patience's sister Prudence had become, mainly through his advice and solicitation, united to his partner, Solomon Weevil, perceive that Edward Claryon had come back from Leyden, where he had been by no means studying law, but rather dicing-tables, Schiedam-cellars, and the frivolous ways of young vrauws with many pet-

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ticoats and golden cock's-combs;—that he had taken up his abode again at Claryon Place, or Pleasant, as it was sometimes called, with his fierce father, Sir Roger;—that he was continually riding over to Longport, stopping his nag at the Trinidad Piazzas, to bid him, Saul Deth, good morrow, begging leave to present his duty to Mistress Deth, and sending servants with fruits and flowers for her delight. The Ship-Chandler's threshold he seldom crossed;—it is really to be believed that the young man could not endure the odour of pitch and tar, resin and tobacco, which penetrated the dwelling-house equally with the warehouse; but he was very frequently a guest—and seemingly a welcome one—at Solomon Weevil's. That smooth professor received him with the most deferential courtesy. His wife, who, apart from the ways of righteousness, had a keen relish for aristocratic acquaintances, made much of the young squire from the ancestral mansion-house; the squire of high degree, of long descent; the squire whose father was very old; whose purse was fat; whose acres broad. It is not a matter for astonishment that Mistress Deth, flying sometimes from the almost intolerable gloom and asceticism of the pitch and tar, resin and tobacco-reeking house in the Trinidad Piazzas, should seek society somewhat more cheerful at her sister's: for Solomon Weevil, although a pious vessel, kept good cheer, and was given to many snug and comfortable mundane things. Nor was it extraordinary that Mistress Deth should meet at her brother's and sister's house this young squire from Claryon Pleasant

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It was not righteous that she should have talked and laughed with him—listened to his wild, weak stories—played airs to him on the spinet—nay, even sung madrigals with him! Was he not her old sweetheart, and jocosely predestined husband of early childhood? There could be no harm in her indulgence in these particularities. They were innocent. Was she not married? Did she not know her duty to her husband? Was not Saul Deth one of the most indulgent, albeit one of the saddest tempered of men? He had faith and confidence in her. She had that generous freedom allowed her which English matrons used to have. She would not abuse his faith, or prove herself unworthy of his confidence: no! not she.

But wake up, Saul Deth! for the wolf is glaring over the bars of the penfold. And wake up! for a robber is trying to force the barred gate; and he who would quaff unlawful draughts is trying to force the cover from a fountain sealed. Wake up, Saul Deth! and read that LETTER lying on the blotting-paper on the desk before thee.

His eyes coming round in their wandering circuit, had lighted on a small sealed packet, and so preoccupied was he by uneasy ruminations, that he at first took no more note of it than though it had been some valueless scrap of paper left there on the eve of the Sabbath, when his clerk made his weekly clearance in the counting-room. But his errant gaze came round again to the sealed packet, and his sharp, drumming fingers found themselves tattooing the softer surface of the letter. Then he bent his

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eyes downwards, and saw it; and still almost mechanically, and as if no letters could be left there save for his partner or himself, he took the packet and broke the seal. Was it by accident or by design that Simnel Coxworthy had left the missive with superscription face downwards on the desk?

The Ship-Chandler unfolded the paper and began to read: at first in a listless and uninterested manner; but gradually his brows began to bend, and his eyes to flash. Quick crimsons, followed by deadly pallor, overspread his face; his fingers clutched at the letter so as to crackle, and crumple, and nearly tear the paper; and, bounding on his seat, he uttered an exclamation that was not at all a pious aspiration.

This was the letter:—

"*Sunday Morning.*

"DEAREST ROSEBUD,—I cannot call you by that pestilential, puritanical name of Patience. Sweetheart, I am wretched. Beloved one, I am distraught with woe. Sure there never was such an unhappy mortal as your Florio." The writer's name was Edward. "It needs all the potency of the love I feel for you, dearest one, to support me under the intolerable miseries which unkind fate and a rigorous father have heaped on this devoted head. Oh! Rosebud, we are to be separated—we are to see each other no more. My father is infuriated to learn, through the treachery, doubtless, of some knave, that our acquaintance has been renewed since my return from the Low Countries. You know he hates the Puritan grocer to whom you are

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unfortunate enough to be yoked, as only a gentleman and a Loyalist can hate a Hanoverian and Roundhead Swaddler." [The Ship-Chandler ground his teeth as he read these insulting words.] "Already has he once banished me from his presence. He threatens now, not only to disinherit, but to visit your Florio with his solemn curse, if I do not immediately consent to unite myself with the detested girl whom he is determined to force upon wretched me. But, fear not my fidelity; I would brave a thousand deaths sooner than contract this most loathed alliance. Yes, I would die first—on the field, in duel, on the ignominious scaffold; nay, by my own hand even, ere I would perjure myself at the altar, and wed one whom I abhor. Oh! Rosebud, what shall I do?—whither shall I go? How can I avert my father's wrath, or mollify his adamantine determination? I blush to transcribe the humiliating fact,—but I am confined, imprisoned here, like the worst of criminals. To conquer that which he is pleased to call my rebellious obstinacy, Sir Roger Claryon has caused the door of my chamber to be locked upon me. The park is patrolled by his watchers. There are spies even at the porter's lodge. My very window is barred. My very riding gear is taken away. The natural harshness of my father's temper is aggravated by the pangs of the cruel disease under which he has been so long suffering; and, with dreadful imprecations, he vows that I shall not leave my room till I have solemnly acceded to his wishes. This I will never do, were I forced to drown myself in the moat beneath the

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casement, or to blow out my brains in the presence of my inexorable parent. For the present, then, my angel, you will see that I am as a captive in the condemned hold; and my anguish is rendered ten thousand times more acute, by the knowledge that you are waiting, according to our delightful Sunday custom, at Longport for me; and that the crop-eared psalm-singer is at his meeting-house across the water." ["Is he?" muttered Saul Deth, between his teeth.] "With infinite trouble I have bribed one of our riding-men to convey this letter to you. But think not that the day will pass without my seeing you. At any risk, at any peril, if it be even at midnight, I will leave this abode of tyranny and despair, and come to Longport, and, though I fear that grizzly old watch-dog of a porter, whom you generally manage to get rid of on a Sunday afternoon, by volunteering to keep watch for him, while he strolls to the tavern to drink your health, I will come to the Piazzas and sound my customary signal —the hunting-whistle—to let you know I am without. Your Puritan husband does not return till Monday morning; but I have no hopes of being able to make my escape before my father retires to rest. This is generally about nine in the evening. I might reach Longport by half-past ten; but be assured that I shall come, be it bare-footed and bare-headed. A thousand kisses from thy adorer till death.

"EDWARD CLARYON."

"He will come! he will come!" muttered the Ship-Chandler, crushing the paper between his

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trembling palms. "He will come! Be it so. I will await him!"

He sprang from his stool to the ground, and pressed his hands to his temples, around which there seemed to be bound a red-hot iron wire. Firey motes danced before his eyes. The outer darkness in the warehouse seemed as black as the Pit of Doom; but the words he had just read were lambent in the blackness, and chased each other in infernal luridness across the space of shadows.

"And I have taken this woman to my bed," he groaned; "toiled for her, slaved for her, prayed for her; made myself a mock and a jeer to mine own brethren, through exceeding tenderness for this daughter of Folly and of Sin. Every wish and every whim she has given token of, have been gratified; she has been nursed and petted like a child. I have abandoned my duty to Heaven for this wretched thing of Earth; and now she betrays and dishonours me for this vain, ignorant, and debauched popinjay; this gilded gad-fly; this rake and profligate, who has not even the capacity to write his own tongue with correctness."

And, indeed, Edward Claryon's letter, although it has been given here in the phraseology of 1862, and not of a hundred years ago, was very villanously spelt.

"Out of my own desires," the Ship-Chandler went on, "I have made whips to scourge myself; the lust of mine eye has turned against me; I have fed and fostered the evil that is crushing me. Woe! woe! I am abandoned and cast out!"

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And the Ship-Chandler threw himself, face forward, on his desk; while down his gaunt cheeks there trickled rivulets of unfamiliar brine.

At this moment the voice of Mistress Deth might have been heard, softly calling from the top of the winding staircase that communicated with the dwelling-house—

"Samuel! Samuel Loveday! Grizzly Sam!"

"Who is there, Mistress Deth?" the Ship-Chandler answered, with a low groan, and counterfeiting, as well as he was able, the voice of his porter.

"Has any one asked for me? Is there any letter for me?" the voice asked, in faltering accents.

The wretched woman, thought the Ship-Chandler, was evidently expecting her lover. She was in an agony of terror lest her husband should be below—lest he should hear the signal, and discover who the person was who sounded it. If Claryon came, she persuaded herself she could have heard the whistle above the noise of the wind and rain, and muffled in her riding-hood, have slipped out to meet him. Besides, had not her husband told her that he was going to Solomon Weevil's? Surely, he would not find Edward there. It was past his time for making his arrival known. She reproached herself with her imprudence for persisting in returning to Longport, particularly in her husband's company. In the morning he had seemed restless, suspicious, more morose than usual; even though he had ceded to her wishes. Rendered reckless by anxiety and

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suspense, she had left the window of her chamber, where she had been waiting for the accustomed signal, and had called into the warehouse, supposing Sam to be there, as we have heard.

"Is there any letter?"

"No, Madam," answered the Ship-Chandler, in his loudest, harshest, most strident voice, yet wincing somewhat as he uttered a deliberate untruth. "There is no letter here for *you*. What decorous Christian matron expects letters on the Sabbath-day?"

The poor little woman fled away like a frightened hare from the sound of that terrible voice; and the Ship-Chandler was once more left alone.

It is dreadful to tell that he, the stern sectarian, the professing Christian, the man whose creed should have taught him that it is meet to forgive our enemies, and to return good for evil, went down upon his knees, and swore a dreadful oath that he would kill this man, this rival, this Edward Claryon, who had dishonoured him, who had murdered his happiness. He had formerly endeavoured to stifle conscience, or to endeavour to soothe the inward voice by sophistry and casuistry. But he now sternly bade conscience stand afar off, and defied it openly.

"Be he sleeping or waking, prepared or unprepared, upstanding or reclining; be he on foot or on horseback, on land or on the sea, in his father's hall or in this house, into which he has brought misery and shame, he shall Die!" he said. "By fair means or by foul he shall die the death! If I, wretched crop-

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eared Puritan grocer be not worthy for him to fight with in open combat, I will stab him or pistol him, were it even in the prelatical steeple-house he profanes by his presence; I will slay him were it on the very verge of the King's Court. His life is forfeit. Felons must die; it is the law. Rogues swing for crimes not a hundredth part so heinous as his. He shall be delivered over to me, and I will put him to death, even if I hack him in pieces before the altar of the household which he has profaned."

Of his strong and active puritanism he had retained but the inflated and turgid phraseology. But that his brain was on fire; that his thoughts were Chaos; that his eyesight was obscured by a bloody mirage, he might have remembered that vengeance belonged not to man, but to the Lord, and that it is written that those who strike by the sword shall perish by the sword.

He remembered, though, in his stern and bloodthirsty purpose, that he had a pair of pistols, that had long lain, rusty and dissued, in the strong-box, where the important papers and sometimes the treasure of the House were kept. Still trembling with nervous excitement, and his eyes feeling like balls of fire, he approached the chest, removed the staples, the hasp and padlock, applied his keys, and opened the coffer. There were the pistols, sure enough, in a rusty leathern belt. He took them out, and adjusting the cincture with the weapons it contained, he forgot even to look if there were any flints to the locks; he buckled them round his waist

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beneath his belt, and then buttoned his coat from neck to middle.

"I am ready for him; I am ready for him," he muttered. The insensate! he had neither powder nor ball; and the pistols might have burst at the very first discharge, even if there had been anything to load them with.

Ere he closed the chest, it occurred to him to open a certain inner coffer of solid iron, clamped, moreover, with heavy bands and studded with rivets, and in which lay, in bags of gold and Bank of England notes, the twenty thousand pounds destined for the liquidation of the acceptances of the morrow. He had a key to this master-coffer, and turned it slowly and thoughtfully in the lock.

The master-coffer was empty.

CHAPTER IV.

TAKEN IN THE TOILS.

EMPTY! And twenty thousand pounds to pay on Monday morning! Where was the use of pistols now, save to blow one's own brains out with? Empty as the Pit, yet at the bottom he seemed to see the flaming fires of despair. The Ship-Chandler saw himself ruined, bankrupt,—his signature dishonoured, his name bruited about as that of a swindler and cheat; the fame for probity he had so nobly won, so sternly preserved, blackened with

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infamy for ever. No more would he hold up his head among the merchants; no longer would he be made room for as an upright man of wealth and substance; the finger of scorn would be pointed at him; the meanest porter in Longport could take the wall of him now. The very rigour of his persistence in right-doing had been a tacit reproach and censure to knavery and fraud. How should he look the knaves in the face when things had come to this pass? Knaves, indeed! Should he look a whit more honest than they? Was this a judgment upon him—a punishment for overweening self-conceit and laudation? Had he been a Pharisee? he asked himself, groaningly. Had he sate in the high places and looked scornfully on the publicans? Praying, had he thanked Heaven that he was not as they were? His horn had been exalted; his trumpet had been sounded loudly in the new moon; the phylacteries had been bound between his eyes; and it had come to this: to this humiliation and disgrace.

Who had robbed him? It must have been his villanous book-keeper. Surely, the clerk must have yielded to some sudden temptation, and stolen away his money bags. And yet he bethought himself that Simnel Coxworthy, albeit vain and conceited, had always been zealous and faithful. To him, Saul Deth, the Ship-Chandler, he had served his apprenticeship. Over and over again he had been trusted with large sums of money; and not once had the defalcation of a penny been discovered in his accounts. He was vain and frivolous, idle and

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whimsical, but, man and boy, he had been honest, alway. Could "Grizzly Sam" have been the thief? But Samuel Loveday had been his confidential servant, and the trusted guardian of his premises for years. As soon would he have suspected a watch-dog. He had served him when he was struggling. He had abided by him as prosperity grew upon him. Master and servant had grown grey together, and in their degrees, loved and respected one another. Then there arose before the ship-chandler the image of Solomon Weevil, with those large smooth hands that he was continually turning one over the other. He came as a dissembling phantom, as a smiling Judas; but he angrily bade the image of his suspicion avaunt; and despairingly repeated to himself that his partner had ever been found true and faithful—faithful and true. For how many years had they not merchandised together? Had not his losses been Solomon's losses? His profits shared with him? Why should he betray him—betray the honour of the house—at this pinch?

Could desperate men—common robbers and burglars—have entered the house? The door was fast closed; the outer and inner locks of the chest were intact. No traces of violence were anywhere perceptible. But there was the naked fact. The box was empty, and the money was gone. Gone, and with it hope and good fame, and life, almost. How to replace it? How to meet the demands that the morrow would bring forth? What excuses could he make, what lies could he tell to avert payment or to gain time? He, the upright, conscientious

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man, felt that he could proffer excuses, and utter the thing that was not, now, to save that dearly beloved idol with the front of brass and feet of clay:—his credit. Could he forge? Upon whom? and with what chance of success? Alas! there was no time, not even for the commission of a crime. Could he coin money? Where were his implements? Where was the craft necessary for a base-moneyer? Should he sell himself to be a slave in the plantations—enlist as a substitute for some repentant recruit? Folly! What would they give for his bowed head and shrunken frame? He was not worth the price of a man. The recruiting sergeant would mock at him. He was not fit even to be a drummer, to beat the tattoo and scourge deserters. Had it been a week-day, he might have called in usurers and money-mongers,—might have conferred with Gideon Lazarus the Jew, who kept the Sailors' lodging cellar in the Inner Shambles. He might have borrowed money on his stock, on dock-warrants, on the cargo of the "Righteous Endeavour." What interest would he not have given —what sacrifices made—what humiliations submitted to, if that box could only be filled again? Was not that good ship on her way to Longport? To-morrow she might be sighted in the Westchester water. To-morrow she might be moored alongside Longport quay. To-morrow she might bring a plenitude of riches to his store—might make him a whole and solvent, nay, prosperous man again. But to-day was the Sabbath-day; and on the morrow

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morning the drafts of exchange would be presented, and there was no hope.

With an uncertain kind of despair quivering and throbbing in every pulse of his heart, there rose before him the necessity of letting Solomon Weevil know of this tremendous disaster. He had quite put on one side his deadly purpose towards the young man from Claryon Pleasant; and when he gathered his damp cloak around him, and a corner of the cape caught in one of the rusty weapons he carried in his belt, he started to find himself girt with pistols. He had forgotten his heart's dishonour; forgotten the betrayer without; forgotten the false wife in the house above. The reality of that misery came and stood over against the reality of pecuniary ruin. He was doubly blasted—doubly overthrown. A touch—a mere finger touch—of better feeling bade him abandon all thoughts of blood-shedding, and reminded him that his appalling misfortune might be, perchance, a pre-ordained chastisement for the homicidal intent he had cherished. But the memory of the wicked oath he had sworn returned again, bloody and terrible, and he muttered that there should be an account to the utmost farthing:—an account he would exact both from the thief of his money, and the darker robber who had taken away his wife's love from him.

So he crept to the door of his warehouse, fumbling in the uncertain light, and narrowly missing, more than once, to trip himself up over his abundant merchandise. To-day all those brave sacks, and bales, and casks, were not worth a doit to him.

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He could not coin the Jamaica sugar into moidores, or the Manchester woollens into bank-bills. He was a ruined man, body and bones; and he and his partner, as fraudulent bankrupts, would rot in Westchester gaol. Should he bribe some boatman to convey him back to Bartle Ferry, and confer with the elders and deacons of his conventicle there? Alas! could gracious Hiram Geddes give him more than blank consolations or pious apothegms on the vanity of human riches? Could all the rich devotees of the congregation—numerous as they were, both male and female, and looked upon as he was, as a shining light among them—raise twenty thousand pounds by the morrow morning? Who would believe his tale of the sudden carrying away of his funds? Was the story feasible, or even possible? He would be reproached with carelessness; he would be asked why, like other traders, he had not made some goldsmith or banker his cash-keeper, to draw his money out as he needed it? That pride, which was of the demon, had made him hoard his gold in fancied security. That pride now forbade him to ask as a suppliant for relief. His neck was not corrigible. He knew not how to hinge the knee. Religionist as he was, he was one of those who worship their Maker upstanding;—who confront him with peremptory solicitation;—who loudly demand that he will overthrow *their* enemies, and with fierce instance claim that he should do justice on those who persecute *them*;—that he will hearken unto *their* voice, and incline His ear to *their* memorials, and consider *their* tribulation.

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No: he could not abase himself to entreaties which involved humility and confession of betrayed self-confidence. He must find Solomon Weevil. He must rout that crafty fox out of his hole. He, cunning man of the world, must devise some expedient, some stratagem, to satisfy the creditors, and preserve the good name of the house. The good name! it was gone already. It had flown away like a dream of the night season. Was there not a False One above-stairs who had forgotten the commandment; who had smiled in her wantonness when the eternal precept thundered? Oh! he was a wretched, a most miserable man! To strangle that white-faced traitress with his own hands; to shoot Claryon, the insolent profligate patrician, like a dog; and then—— What next? To kill himself, it might be, or to die the death of the shedder of blood. The shadows cried out "Cain!" upon him as he stumbled through the increasing darkness, and all the twisted hemp in his stores, from cable tow to farthing twine, seemed to turn to halters, and gape for his neck as their coils hung pendant from the beams. As he opened the heavy door, the chain on the jamb clanged with a lugubrious sound, like the gyves over the prison-door at Westchester, when an evil wind was about.

So he went out into the rain, and into the tempest; and there was darkness before, and darkness behind, and darkness within him. The door which he slammed behind him could not be opened again; but he little heeded that. He had provided himself with a second key. For aught he cared all the

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robbers of the county might come and rifle his rich stores now, and welcome. Stay! a bright thought shot like a lurid gleam of lightning through his dark and troubled brain. Should he set the warehouse on fire, and let the Trinidad Piazzas and the "Angel and Compasses," all blaze together? It would be a brave revenge—worthy of the Fiend who suggested it—to let the dwelling-house burn too, so that nothing but a heap of charred cinders and a cloud of black vapour laden with greasy motes should remain of the fair, false form, whose owner had sworn love and fealty to him at the altar. There would be, surely, sympathy for his double loss. Creditors would wait. The "Righteous Endeavour" would come into port. His brother traders would be eager in tendering assistance. The Elders would put up prayers for one who had suffered such dire affliction. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," muttered Saul Deth; and he turned again in the tempest, and looked at the tempting timbers of the Piazzas, and thought how dry were some of the goods in those Piazzas, and how inflammable were all those barrels of tar, and turpentine, and alcohol, and how they would flare and leap up into forked tongues of flame that would creep up to the chimney-tops, and redden the sky for miles round. Vengeance was Another's; but it might be his—Saul Deth's. He would go and seek Solomon Weevil, and he would see. He compromised with himself for the moment. He shrank from hugging the Demon to his bosom; but he suffered him to walk beside him and gloss in his

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ear. And those who play with the Devil's rattles soon come to handling of his sword. And between gathering flowers on the brink of a precipice and tumbling over it into endless perdition there is but a moment. And between the contemplation of a great crime and its actual commission there is but the difference between a white thread and a black thread in an uncertain daybreak. And as he emerged from the shelter of the colonnade, and struggled onward, the rain beating in his face, the red glare of an enormous conflagration seemed to swallow up the darkness, encompass him, and struggle with the torrents of water, and scorch them up to the dryness of the great Desert.

Solomon Weevil inhabited a modest house in Trumpington-street, which was some two hundred yards distant from the Piazzas, up the town. Saul Deth had to bear for fifty yards along the quay to the west ere he could find an inlet giving to this part of Longport, and he had not advanced many paces before he became aware of a figure making towards him from the opposite direction. The afternoon was quite boisterous enough to render it necessary for a judicious pedestrian to steer very carefully, even to the extent of "tacking," and occasionally "bearing up" altogether, if he wished to avoid being carried off his legs by the violence of the gale—no improbable occurrence to a light-limbed man; but the individual whom Saul Deth discerned in the act of progression towards him, seemed to be more than ordinarily incommoded by the inclemency of the weather; and, to tell truth,

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with his head bent down and his arms spread out, advanced with a motion that alternated between a reel and a stagger, far more resembling that of a drunken man than of a labouring ship. With much astonishment, when the figure came near enough for its identity to be established, Saul Deth recognised between a hat once smartly cocked, now a mere limp pledget of felt, and a once spruce blue camlet coat, now drenched to irretrievable ruin by the rain, the tallowy features of his quondam apprentice and now junior book-keeper, Simnel Coxworthy.

"Why, how now, Simnel?" he said, sternly, placing himself right before his servant, who, now that he was brought, so to speak, to an anchor, staggered in a most woful manner; "what brings you out in such a season? What is the matter with you, sirrah? Has it been raining Geneva instead of water? and why are you not at chapel?"

"Shapple!" murmured Simnel Coxworthy, "whatsh a shapple? Never saw a shapple on a Shunday."

"You shall see a black hole till a Monday morning, and a pair of stocks for those drunken legs of yours; ay, and nine lashes of stout whipcord over your graceless back," angrily retorted his master. "Where have you been, you varlet?"

"Shatan," stammered Simnel, looking at the ship-chandler with a wandering eye, and making an impotent movement with his right hand, as if to keep his interlocutor off. "Shatan—that ish, Shaul

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Dethsh, I defy thee. Get thee behind me, Shaul Shatan."

"I'll get behind thee with a cudgel, you pottle-pot," cried the Ship-Chandler, enraged. "Where have you been tippling in this unholy manner, knave?"

"Couldn't find the shocolate house," answered the dissipated book-keeper. "Never can find shocolate house on Shunday. All gone to shapple with the 'Righteous Endeavour.'"

"The expected ship is running in the poor fellow's head," thought the Ship-Chandler to himself. "Forgetting his Sabbath duties in his solicitude for his master's interests, he has gone down among the boatmen at the jetty, to seek tidings of her; and in their ungodly fashion, they have made him drink punch or other vanities till he is demented. "Speak, Simnel," he continued aloud, in a kinder manner, and laying his hand on the book-keeper's shoulder; "gather up thy thoughts and answer me. What knowest thou of the 'Righteous Endeavour?' Has the good ship been sighted?"

In reply, the deboshed Simnel Coxworthy essayed to sing a stave of an old drinking-song, as old as Charles the Second's time. He began—

"Heresh a healtsh to sher king."

Here he wandered, repeated the line, tried in vain to remember the next; then drawing himself together, assumed a look of imperturbable and drunken gravity, and said: "Down amongsh sher dead men!"

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"What do you mean, sot?" cried the Ship-Chandler, a pang of alarm shooting through his heart at the ominous words, although they were very probably merely the chance exclamation of a drunken man.

"Gone to sher bottom with all handsh," Simnel Coxworthy with great difficulty managed to explain. "Gonsh on boardsh sher 'Black Harry' wish Sholomon Weevil. Gonshoo ye shevil wish twenshy shousand poundsh."

"Madman! liar!" almost yelled Saul Deth; "what ravings are these?"

"Twenshy shousand poundsh," repeated Simnel, as though he rather liked the sound of that sum than otherwise. "Sholomon Weevil's a shief, so wash Taffy—I mean Tom Showler—and he's gonshoo yer bottom ofsher shea, wish twenshy shousand 'Rigsheous Enjeavoursh.' No; shat isn't it. Sher 'Endeavoursh' wrecksh, and Sholomon Weevil's run away wisher money, and I am honisht man."

And as though the recurrence of the idea that Solomon Weevil had run away seemed irresistibly suggestive to Mr. Simnel Coxworthy that the best thing he could do was to run away too, he suddenly crammed a dirty, tumbled sheet of paper into his master's hand, and fairly fled—running away in no particular direction, save that of the wind, as fast as ever his drunken legs could carry him.

And he left Saul Deth with the letter in his hands—and the letter was Solomon Weevil's.

But it is necessary that I should return to the ship-chandler's warehouse in the Trinidad Piazzas,

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and that I should pass further on, to the dwelling-house adjoining, and up a narrow staircase, to where, in her keeping-room, sat pretty Patience Deth, weeping and trembling at she knew not what.

At least half-a-dozen times she had ventured to the top of the back-staircase leading to the warehouse, listening if her husband were still there. She was in agony lest the familiar whistle from without should have been sounded. She hoped that its shrill note might be drowned by the fury of the storm. For fear lest Edward might have approached the house while she was away, she placed, over and over again, a scarlet flower in the sill of the window looking to the street, the flower —unhappy girl!—which was the customary response to his signal. She had heard her husband's footsteps pacing to and fro beneath, and ever and anon an indistinct muttering, as though he were talking to himself. Then there was a noise, as of an outer door being sharply closed, and a dead silence, which lasted for a long time. Emboldened by the hope that her moody lord had taken his departure, and that he was gone, perchance to Solomon Weevil's, or to the house of some other friend, she stole again to the head of the stairs and listened. There was nothing, now, but the same dead silence. With trembling hands she kindled a taper, for it was pitchy dark, and cautiously descended the stairs into the warehouse. There was no one there; no one in the counting-room. But, as she was thus relieved from one fear, another came over her, that Saul Deth might meet Claryon in the street on his

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way to the Trinidad Piazzas. Surely he had a right, had Edward, to be in Longport, if he listed, on Sabbath as well as week-days; but the two men had never loved one another, and Edward was violent and hot-headed—ah! how hot-headed she knew too well—and there had been of late a suspicious manner about her husband that terrified her, and almost froze her young blood in her veins. Suspicious! what had he to be suspicious of?—Mistress Patience Deth thought, drawing herself up, proudly. But in the midst of her pride she blushed and turned pale, turn by turn. No; she was not guilty, not guilty, yet; she repeated to herself. Vain and deluded woman! was there no guilt in deceiving a trusting husband—in awaiting here an interview with a young, rash, reckless man? But she was not guilty yet, she said again; and strove to find some miserable consolation in that self-deception.

She was mounting the stairs again, the taper flickering, as though the tiny flame participated in her own terrors, when, through a lull in the storm, she heard a sound, soft, but shrill and prolonged.

It was the whistle.

She flew rather than walked to the warehouse-door, and opened it with shaking hands. Yes; it was he. He had come at last. It was Edward; and she was guilty again, but happy in her wretched guilt.

The young man's garments were soaked and dripping with wet; and his fair hair hung about his

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shoulders in dank masses. His head—on such an evening, too—was uncovered, and he gasped and panted as though overcome with fatigue.

The woman dragged him rather than led him to the counting-room, and stood before him with heaving breast and eager eyes. Why had she sworn to love, honour, and obey the Ship-Chandler?

The boy and girl—for they were scarcely more—began to interchange incoherent exclamations of endearment, and protestations of affection, which I disdain to record; but it is meet that so much should be said as will cast a light on the origin and progress of their unhappy love.

It had not, as yet, gone beyond the bounds of prudence. There was time for both to retrace their footsteps, and to avoid the precipice which yawned before them. They were so young, and both so inexperienced, that an imprudence, however reprehensible—culpable if you will—was still not wholly unpardonable. But, ah, me! for the imprudence that thinks itself prudence; and the rigid virtue, that, allowing its hand to be kissed, averts its head and murmurs, "I have granted nothing, I shall never cede." And woe for the ship-master who, in foolish confidence of security, will not venture into the ocean, but hugs the shore; and some day sees his vessel strike, and dashed to pieces on that rock-bound coast which seemed so smiling half-an-hour since. They were not guilty—this wretched pair. They had only played at Sin. But has not a wise divine written, that he who plays with the Devil's rattles will soon come to handling of his sword;

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and that he who stoops forward to kiss the flowers at the brink of the Pit, may discern something he thinks a jewel glittering among the leaves further down, and so, stooping and stooping, and stretching and stretching, tumble off into Tarpeian destruction.

Patience and Edward could not bear long that grim counting-room. There, the stern spirit of the Ship-Chandler seemed to throne with a reproachful presence; and there was a warning silence in the very panels, and desks, and files of musty papers. She beckoned to him, and they went, sadly, cowering, upstairs into her keeping-room;—into the tall old chamber with polished oaken floor, half-covered with a Turkey carpet; the wide fireplace with its shining and-irons, and walls lined with Dutch tiles—Scriptural emblems burnt bright blue into them—and heavy, lowering mantel of carved work; the ponderous furniture of oak, garnished with cushions of needlework; the oval mirror with its branch sconces for candles; the swinging shelf full of good books—of the solemnest and sourest kind of goodness, you may be sure; the corner cupboard full of old Delft, and newer Chelsea china ware: the simpering Chinese mandarins and ladies, with fans, and topknots, and poplin gowns, and pearl necklaces, and small feet, seemed strangely out of place, gleaming from the porcelain, amidst the staid decorum of the other appointments of the keeping-room. There was a window from a deep embrasure, from which Patience had looked so many times that

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afternoon into the storm for Edward; and there was a broken flower on the ground—her signal.

And they were both as yet Prudent, and not Guilty.

CHAPTER V.

SAUL DETH SINGS SONGS, AND SUPS.

INNOCENT or guilty they stood and looked, and loved, and were happy and miserable, triumphant and repentant, eloquent and dumb, smiling and tearful, confident and fearful. In short, there were, by starts and flashes, murmurs and short sighs, and glances and movements, and hurried interchange of hand-clasping. But not guilty before the Law of Stoning. No.

"Oh, Edward! Edward!" sobbed Patience, at last, when coherence had toned down all this whimpering madness; "what a day—what a night! Ah! if thou couldst tell my sufferings—the anguish of this poor heart!"

She "thee'd" and "thou'd" sometimes, did Madam Deth. She had caught the trick from the Ship-Chandler. The rest of her nonsense was her own.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the young man, who could write but not talk sentimentally; "I have escaped from that worse than Bastille, my own home. I seem but to have made one bound from Claryon Pleasant to this house, though I have been

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scampering through rain and quagmires, and the deuce knows what else."

"But what a plight you are in! How wet you are! No hat, no riding gear! Sure, thou wilt catch a quinsy, or worse, dear Edward."

"It is as it is," replied the young squire, glancing moodily at his drenched and muddy garments. "I fled from my father's house while he selpt. Fled like a beggar. Fled like a schoolgirl from whom her gouvernante hath locked up her petticoat and capuchin lest she should run away with an Irish ensign that goes a fortune-hunting. And I would have gone through worse perils for you, Rosebud. I swore that I would see you this night, and I have kept my vow."

Some one else, too, had sworn a vow that same night, and might keep, also, his oath. After all, there was not so much courage in running away from home; and Edward Claryon had better have left his oath unsworn.

Patience Deth smoothed his hair, and strove to dry that and his garments with cloths. There were plenty of garments about, but she did not dare ask him to change his attire. Time was fleeting fast. At any moment the Ship-Chandler might make his appearance, and yet she could not bring upon herself—fond and infatuated as she was—to warn her lover of his danger, and bid him depart.

She brought out meat and drink, however, and pressed refreshments on him; and, but that he forbade her, would have lighted a fire and found an excuse for it—some temporary chilliness of her

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own—on her husband's return. The young man drank off a draught of wine, and sat down, she by him, holding his hand in hers, and toying with it in a pretty, lingering, but most guilty way.

"And thou wilt not marry, Florio?" she said, softly, and averting her head as she spoke, as though she dared not brook the answer should it chance to run counter to that response which her heart yearned for.

"Not if Miss Betsy Delascore had fifty thousand instead of fifteen to her fortune," returned Claryon. "'Tis not alone on that account I would not marry her. Thou knowest, Rosebud, that we are of good fortune and figure, and that the son and heir of Sir Roger Claryon might wed whom he chose in his degree."

"I know it, I know it," murmured the poor ship-chandler's wife, thinking of her own mean estate—a mere tradeswife coupled to a vendor of plums and figs, and other base merchandize. "I know that the richest and noblest in the land would be proud to ally themselves to Claryon blood, and join their broad demesnes to Claryon Pleasant. But thou wilt not marry, Florio? Oh! Edward, Edward! if you did it would break my heart," she continued, with a burst of weeping.

"I tell thee I have no thoughts of marrying any one, were she of as ancient a family as a High Dutch Margravine, or as rich as a Russian Czarina," the young man answered, almost pettishly. "I love thee too well, sweetheart. Have I not braved my father's anger; left him groaning in his bed

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with the gout; bribed his body servant; promised more bribes—which I shall have to pay even if I sell my watch and my silver hunting-hanger—to the keepers and watchers, and all the spies set upon me by my father? And at last I got clear off."

"I know you are noble and disinterested, dear Edward," the woman was beginning, when—

There was a noise in the street beneath, and a rattling at the door of the dwelling-house. The wretched pair gazed around them with scared eyes.

"What is that?" asked the young squire, rising. "Hush! hark! 'tis some one singing."

"'Tis some tipsy night-wanderer," Mistress Deth tremblingly answered.

Hush and hark again, and hearken with all your ears, you young man and woman, for the voice became louder and louder; and the voice of the singer had a strange semblance unto that of Saul Deth, the ship-chandler.

It must have been his ghost. It was impossible—so they thought, reasoning against the evidence of their senses—that the singer could be the saintly master of the house. For not only were his accents those of the "tipsy night-wanderer," who occurred to the imagination of Mistress Deth, but the ditty he chanted was of the most graceless description, being none other than a wild song then much in vogue in taverns and worse haunts—usually trolled, indeed, by itinerant ballad-singers—and called the "Black Joke."

Was Longport going mad? Were its merchants to be reckoned as Bedlamites, that one of its most

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reputable traders could at this unseasonable hour—and on a Sabbath evening, too—he heard echoing the staves of tavern roysterers? At first, Madam Deth thought it must be some riotous ne'er-do-well wishing to turn the righteous into derision, and make a mock of a good man, and so counterfeiting her husband's voice. But on listening attentively, the terrified pair agreed that it was the voice of Saul Deth which they heard, and not any other. There was no mistaking his harsh lower notes. Wife, clerks, servants, porters had heard them often and trembled. That voice had often made itself audible in command and in reproof; but its angriest diapason was not so ominous to listen to as the tone in which the righteous Saul Deth gave emphasis to a vile song which was the favourite melody of the riffraff and the lullaby of graceless seafaring men, far gone in aqua vitæ.

Had Edward Claryon been attired in any seemly manner, Patience Deth could, without much difficulty, have devised some subterfuge to account for his presence at that time and in that place. For there is nothing so easy as to lay the first stone of a Lie:—block of masonry, mortar, and trowel lie ready to our hand. The resolute and cunning builder can, with amazing celerity, too, raise a superstructure of lies upon lies, till the Black Babel rises high, and shames Heaven; only the level and the square are always wanting when the first stone is laid; and when the architect tries the finished building, the plumb-line agrees not with the erected would-be perpendicular, and at a touch, at a whiff of

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wind, the Black Babel falls into an abyss where no foundations can be laid, and through which the corner-stones of Sin continue sinking for ever and ever.

Yes; Patience could have made a hundred excuses, and lied most plausibly, but for the extraordinary guise which the young man presented. Without hat or sword, without waistcoat or neckerchief, and what attire he had on soaked with rain, and splashed from head to heel with mud, how could this unbrushed, unpowdered, slipshod young desperado be the gallant spark who was wont to ride into Longport town so proudly, in his laced frock and hat smartly cocked, his amber-headed whip in hand, and his silver-hilted hanger by his side? This could not be the young Squire, Edward Claryon, the swaggering buck and pretty fellow of all the mansions, and chocolate-houses, and strawberry gardens, and race-courses, and cocking matches of the country side.

Meanwhile, the shutters rattled louder than ever; and the strains of the "Black Joke" suddenly ceasing, Patience heard—the rain was over, the moon was up, the wind had subsided, and the night was calm—a sharp pattering noise against the window-panes of the keeping-room above, as though the person without were throwing handfuls of gravel thereat; while between the volleys of this small-shot the voice of Saul Deth—his own voice, now, natural and terrific—boomed upwards, loudly demanding admittance.

What to do? Whither to go? The young woman's perturbation was far shorter in time than

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I have taken to tell it; but it was years long in agony. She looked about, scared, as though for some cupboard or cellar into which to thrust her lover; but no such retreat was nigh. At last she whispered,—

"Into the counting-room, the counting-room; or anywhere in the warehouse. I will lock the door upon you; lure my husband up-stairs; and when I have pacified him, release you. For Heaven's sake! make no noise."

I have said that the narrow little flight of stairs leading into the warehouse branched off from the landing-place of the dwelling-house's main staircase. Edward Claryon, whose mind was not fruitful of expedients in time of danger, and whose physical courage—I am sorry to say—was not equal to his moral rashness, would gladly have adopted any loop-hole of escape, short of that of leaping out of a second-floor window; and I much question whether he would not have had recourse to that desperate measure in preference to facing the dreaded ship-chandler.

Patience Deth, who had ten times more real bravery, although she too shook like an aspen-leaf, almost pushed him down the stairs,—almost impatiently gave a negative demand to the young man's heedless demand for a candle or a lantern, and bidding him remain perfectly quiet, shut the warehouse door, and turned the key upon him. Then summoning up her resolution, and making a strong internal effort to efface all symptoms of agitation from her bearing, she advanced up the corridor

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leading to the street, and opened the door upon her husband.

He clapped both his large bony hands upon her shoulders, and holding her away from, but right in front of him, looked at her from head to foot, wagged his head, and burst into a horrible laugh.

"Ho, ho! dainty mistress of mine," he cried; "this is better than psalm-singing—better than canting or whining, is it not? I have been with some jovial boys, and I have had a rare carouse."

"Some jovial boys!" "A rare carouse!" And to hear the righteous Saul Deth talk thus!

"Not so pleasant, though, cooling one's heels on the damp flags after a skin-full of hot punch. And at the door of one's own house, too. One would think you were keeping other company besides your bible and your cat, good Mistress Deth."

He had entered the corridor by this time, and had closed the door behind him with a kick and a push of his strong back; but he still kept his hands on his wife's shoulders, peering in her face, wagging his head, and laughing strangely, and guiding her before him, as it were towards the foot of the staircase. Patience could not convince herself—for all that he spoke of punch and revelling—that he was affected by undue potations. It seemed far more feasible to her that some sudden shock or revulsion of feeling had driven her husband out of his wits.

"Indeed, Saul," she said, softly and soothingly, and striving with a sickly smile to pacify him, "'tis lonely enough in my keeping-room—my bower, as you sometimes call it—with Tib the cat, for that is all the

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company I have had; although no Christian woman should feel lonely with good books around her."

"Tara tidu tidum!" the Ship-Chandler made answer, using a frivolous burden of interjection much used a hundred years ago by fashionable ladies and gentlemen, when they did not think it worth their while to return a rational answer to anything said to them. "Cats and good books! truly so, oh pearl among women! I too have been among good books:—Geneva print, Jamaica binding, good mistress mine. You have been reading and praying—to say nothing of thinking on your loving husband far away. Come, Goody Whiteface, we will go to your chamber, an' it please you."

No; his was not the speech, the demeanour, of a toper. There was a sardonic fierceness in his words; there seemed a hidden purpose in his ghastly merriment and reckless talk, that alarmed and almost appalled the woman standing before him. Could he have discovered—could he be suspecting, even now, aught?

Discover! suspect! what!

They went up-stairs, the oaken degrees giving out hollow echoes that pealed through the tall house, and found faint responses in yonder warehouse full of ship-chandlery. On the landing-place his skirt brushed against the handle of the door that was locked. He turned, and rattled the knob carelessly; and the lantern that was in his wife's hand danced among the shadows which surrounded its glare.

"Safe and sound! Safe and sound!" cried Saul,

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with his grim gaiety; "all locked up while the husband is away. Everything—womankind and all—under lock and key. Oh be joyful! for faithful servants and prudent wives. Say, you Cat!" he continued, with sudden fierceness, "what made you keep me waiting at the door so long?"

Before the preceding day, Saturday, he had never, since he had known her, spoken a harsh word to his wife. On that Saturday even his language was, albeit in severe reprehension, measured and courteous. But he addressed her, now, as though she had been the veriest trull in the Tolzey.

"Master Deth," the pretty creature he had outraged indignantly began, as though she were essaying to resume her own old empire over him—"Master Deth——" But she broke down at the remembrance of her unworthiness; and, while hot tears pattered on the lantern-top, she began to falter out some woman's excuses, and to sob very piteously. He had ever used to be moved at her weeping.

"Tara tidu tidum!" the Ship-Chandler said again. "Quick, forward, my good lady Crocodile, and get me some meat and drink for supper. We will be jolly and joyful, oh! ho!" And the demented creature burst into a screech, which, from a stray fag end of verse here and there, seemed intended for the Jacobite song of "Charley over the Water." The world had gone mad indeed, when loyal Hanoverians could yell out such treasonable carols.

It was of a-piece with his otherwise extraordinary proceedings, that Saul Deth—the most tem-

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perate of men—who, as a rule, never took any supper beyond a ship's biscuit soaked in milk, and touched nothing stronger as a beverage than tea, or an occasional cup of the smallest ale, should have made a demand for such untimely refection. His wife produced a round of hung beef, a great brown loaf, and a Westchester cheese. Of all these he ate voraciously; afterwards calling for drink, and of the strongest. There were sample bottles of Nantz and of Geneva, and a great stone bottle of Burton beer in the cupboard; and of all these did Saul Deth drink greedily. Then, pushing the table away from him, he mixed a mighty bumper of ship's rum and water, and, filling a pipe with tobacco from an iron box, began and continued to drink and smoke; ever and anon bursting out in some fragment of mundane and profane song, until the clock struck eleven.

Saul carry a tobacco-box! Saul drink ship's rum! Saul smoke! Saul sing "Black Jokes" and "Charley over the Water;" to say nothing of "Merry Buck Boys!" and "Stingo Flip!" the most bacchanalian ditties of the "Thrush" collection. Was the world, being at its maddest, coming to an end?

His wife sat opposite to him—for it was his strange whim that she should there sit; and she watched him and was troubled, and turned paler and paler, still deserving the name he had given her of "Whiteface." She tried to simulate weariness, and yawned, and moved uneasily in her chair; but he never budged from his enjoyment, which—all-

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unwonted as it was—did not seem to produce the slightest effect upon him. Had he too been keeping a mask on for all these years? were his piety and abstinence but hypocrisy and deceit? and was this rigid professor at best but one of the ungodly?

When the clock struck eleven, Patience ventured meekly to express a wish that she might be allowed to retire; whereupon her husband laughed loud and long, and said that many things yet remained to be done.

"You who lock doors so well, must unlock them," he remarked, with an ugly grin. I am going down-stairs. I am going to make my rounds, mistress of mine. I must search both warehouse and counting-room, for Grizzly Sam has given me the slip. There hath been no watchman below; and I must see that all is safe and sound—safe and sound." And he rose, draining off his bumper, and lighted the lantern again from the taper on the table, and moving towards the door, commanded his wife to follow him.

She noticed that his coat was buttoned tight up to his throat, and that he had a bulging at his waist, as though he wore a belt, with something thrust in it, there. But for her terror and agitation, she would have noticed it before; for it was his custom of an evening to exchange his out-door garments for a loose night-gown of soberly-striped flannel.

"There is no need to go the rounds," she stammered; her poor eyes wandering from his strange face and figure to that open doorway which must

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lead to discovery, and ruin, and dishonour, and perhaps to death. "There is no need, dear Saul; I made strict search while you were away. All doors are locked; all windows barred. Oh! I am so tired and worn out, Saul! let us retire to our sleeping chamber."

"Keep your eyelids open for five minutes longer, my pretty baby," returned her husband; "we *will* go the rounds once more, most careful of helpmates. Do you follow—better, do you go before me. If you don't," he added, savagely, "I'll fling you downstairs like a bundle of rags."

She obeyed. She had no choice but to obey. He was strong, and fierce, and determined, and perhaps armed; and she was weak and a woman, and, in her soul, full of guilty prescience. "If the worst come to the worst," she thought, "and he discovers him, I shall have some one to protect me from the fury of this madman." She had settled in her mind that he must be mad. She could not—she dared not adopt the persuasion that he had suspected, and might discover, and could Punish. So thinks he who sees Damocles' sword—the thread that held it snapped—whizzing through the air towards him, and says, "It is meant for another. It comes not me-ward. I shall not die."

They were at the door on the landing-place. He rattled again at the handle. A ray of hope broke in upon her. "He will hear the noise," she thought, "if he be in the counting-room, and leave it; and it may be that my husband will be content without searching the warehouse."

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"Where is the key?" asked Saul Deth.

"It is up-stairs," she answered.

"Fetch it!" he replied. And he held the lantern carefully up, to light her on her way to the keeping-room.

"I don't—I don't think," she murmured, pausing on the stair, "that I can find it just now. I think that I must have mislaid it at supper-time. Surely to-morrow morning will do as well."

"Great things may happen before to-morrow morning. Fetch the key, hussey! or with my shoulder will I burst open this door."

One hope only remained to her. The door giving to the Trinidad Piazzas could, when closed, be opened from the inside. Grizzly Sam might have left it unlocked, and Edward have escaped that way. Alas! she knew not that Saul Deth had a second key.

She obeyed his behest; and brought what he required. He opened the door, and they passed down the narrow stair. She was a young, weak woman; but I think if she had had a pistol then, that she would have blown his brains out as she walked behind him.

So into the counting-room — he setting down his lantern and peering around him. There was no room for concealment there; everything was in its usual place. No sound broke the stillness of the place, beyond the ticking of the clock and their own breathing. She felt momentarily relieved. Perhaps the worst was past, and his fretful humour might end there. After all, it might have been the

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drink that had discomposed his brain. He would go up-stairs, perhaps, to bed; and when he slept, she would steal down again and release her lover.

The Ship-Chandler, on his part, seemed not wholly dissatisfied. Perhaps it suited his wish that what he came to seek should not be in the place where he first sought it. He leaned his arms upon the desk, and chuckled—

"Safe and sound! Safe and sound! Oh! these are troublous times! and there are wicked men about, seeking to undo the righteous. Oh! my beloved, it behoves us to be cautious, and to take care of our worldly goods and chattels; yea! and of our gold and silver, as well as of our spiritual welfare."

"You have always placed grace and righteousness above the consideration of mere earthly riches, Saul," his wife observed, deprecatingly.

"Aye! aye!" returned the Ship-Chandler, with a shrug. "That's all very well in the conventicle, my pretty Patience — excellent doctrine for the Elders and the Deacons. But we are people of business, wife of mine. We must set our houses in order, even the houses that are made with hands. Wonder not, then, chide me not, if I was well-nigh distraught with anxieties and carking fears to-night. This house has a high name among the factors and brokers; and to-morrow morning the firm of Deth and Weevil have heavy payments to make on drafts of exchange. There are twenty thousand pounds to be paid before noon to-morrow. Twenty thousand golden pounds my wife Patience!"

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Her heart leapt for joy within her. After all, it was Mammon, not the demon of jealousy that had disturbed him. He had become morose—had perhaps drunk more than his wont in some pre-occupation of money-bags. He had heavy payments to make. That she knew.

"But you have seen our good partner, Solomon Weevil, dear?" she asked; scarcely, in her tremor, knowing what to say, but still saying it caressingly.

"No," answered the Ship-Chandler, slowly, and eyeing his wife narrowly the while; "I have *not* seen Solomon Weevil. Solomon Weevil is ill—sick to death of the disease called the 'Black Harry.' Have you ever heard of such an ailment, Patience?"

He bent his head on one side, and waited with avidity for her reply. But her face spoke nothing but a puzzled amazement. Of that he thought she was at least innocent. She was no accomplice in the robbery.

"But Solomon Weevil was here yesterday evening as hale and as hearty as usual; so," she urged, timidly, "whence and how got he this unknown malady you speak of, and why has my sister Prudence not been here to tell me of her husband's sickness?"

"There, that will do," interrupted Saul Deth. "I was but jesting. I love to jest now on Sabbath nights. It is peculiar. But I was telling you, Patience, about these payments we have to make to-morrow. Twenty thousand pounds would buy

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thee plenty of ribbons and fal-lals. Eh! sweetheart?"

"You are jesting, Saul."

"Yes; I love to jest. Is it not Sabbath night? Now thou knowest that our store of wealth is never entrusted to the hands of bankers, but that I keep it here in that good strong box of mine."

"I have often heard you say so."

"Oh! it is a mighty comfort and consolation to know that all this money is safely stowed away to meet the demands of Black Monday. It is there, my wife; there, in the strong chest with three strong locks; there, in gold and bank-bills, safely secured in an inner casket. Oak and iron and good locksmith's work are an hundredfold better than your fine bubble banking-houses, that may go bankrupt in an hour. If I choose to lend my money out at usance—good usance, sure usance, with approved security and prompt returns—well and good; but when my money and its fructifications return, into the strong box they go. Put not your trust in goldsmiths, Mrs. Deth, nor in any money-changers."

He was not himself, yet, albeit he spoke with some degree of coherence. His manner, his look, a chance word he uttered now and then, made her heart beat quicker, and her face grow pale and flushed by turns.

All at once he rose from his desk, and flinging open the door of the counting-room, which he had closed on his entrance, looked out into the ware-

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house. He had caught up the lantern, and holding it at arm's length, half swung it round. His wife—desperate in her terror as she was—would have sprung forward to arrest him; but faintness and giddiness prevented her, and she leant against the desk for support.

"How dark it is yonder!" the Ship-Chandler said, returning to the desk, and setting down the lantern. "I thought, too, that I heard a noise; but I was, doubtless, mistaken. Or it might have been a rat—a rat, dost hear, Mrs. Deth?"

She murmured something half inaudible.

"You must be indeed weary, angel of mine," remarked the Ship-Chandler, turning his head sharply towards her; "I will but open the chest and verify the safety of my moneys, and then we go above, and take that rest we both so much require."

He carried the lantern to his strong box, and set it on the ground. Then she heard him jangling the keys; then the grating of those instruments in the street locks; and then the heavy lid of the chest as it fell back on its hinges. And then she heard a horrid yell; and starting forward, she found Saul Deth tearing his hair, and crying, "Thieves! thieves! thieves!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

"For Heaven's sake tell me what has happened," cried Patience, springing forward, as the terrible cry broke from her husband.

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To her surprise the Ship-Chandler did not continue his exclamations. He bent his head a little in advance, holding his hand to his ear in a listening attitude, with his other hand waving her off.

"Hush, hush! sweetheart," he whispered hoarsely and tremulously. "We are robbed, Patience. The gold—the gold that was to pay to-morrow's drafts has been conveyed away. An enemy has done this. Hush, prithee, hush!"

Then, in strange contradiction to his own injunction, he began to shout out, louder and louder, "Thieves! thieves!" and darting forward with just the kind of motion that a terrier would make in darting on a rat, he pounced upon a bale of calicoes that stood about ten feet in advance, a little to the left of the counting-room. The agonized woman whom he had left there heard a sharp, short struggle, a muttered interjection from the Ship-Chandler, a half-smothered appeal for mercy in a voice to her too well known. A cold sweat bedewed her at the thought that her husband had some fatal weapon concealed about him, and that he had slain his enemy then and there, in cold blood. But it was not so. After a hurried scuffle, the lantern gleamed once more within the counting-room; but its light illumined two more figures in addition to that of the pale and shivering Patience. One was the form of Saul Deth, rigid now, and erect and strong, and with a kind of stern triumph mantling in the furrows of his face. And the other was—O! shame to tell it, half crouching on the floor, hiding his face in his hands—the figure of the heir of Claryon Pleasant.

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There was no use in blinking the matter. The young man, for all his ancient blood and sometimes swaggering mien, was a recreant and a coward. He was, indeed, taken in the toils; and now he was ready to cry for quarter to the hunter who had captured him. He was quite broken down and overwhelmed, and he would have clung to the skirts of his braver mistress—for even she, in all her womanish terror, was more courageous than he—or kissed the skirts of the Ship-Chandler's rough garments, if by so bemeaning he could have benefited himself.

There was no likelihood of his attempting to fly—poor timorous wretch—and Saul Deth let him have play, even as a cat would give factitious regress to the mouse she has caught and sports with, aware that it cannot escape.

"I knew that thieves had entered my house." Thus did the Ship-Chandler break the awful silence that for some minutes had reigned: "and behold, here is one of them. Here is the robber who comes in the night season and steals away the gold of honest men who live in the fear of God and the King's Peace."

His reckless, defiant, ribald manner, so strangely put on that evening, was now as strangely and suddenly abandoned. Once more he had become the starched and precise Puritan, Saul Deth; but there was nothing demure, nothing charitable in his visage or his speech. The voice was that of a judge who was also an accuser.

"Behold the thief in the night!" he repeated, slowly and sternly. "What sayest thou, Edward Claryon? What sayest thou, Madam Deth?"

His wife, thus addressed, could answer nought, but clasp her hands and stare wildly at him, as though she divined some dreadful purpose in his speech. But the young man arose—he had not been so roughly used by Saul; 'twas his terror, chiefly, that had cast him prostrate—and, leaning on the desk, for his lower limbs yet trembled, made shift for a reply.

"An unfortunate man, Sir, but no robber," he said, with an attempt at firmness.

"As unfortunate," retorted the Ship-Chandler, with a sneer, "as poor Jack o' the Tolzey, who swings on a Monday morning before the shirehall at Westchester for stealing horses or cutting purses. Bah! I know thy wanton manners—thy profligate order. Hark! dost hear the clock boom out? It is midnight. I have found thee concealed in my warehouse, and thou hast stolen my gold from this strong chest of mine. There is both evidence to prove the crime and law to punish thee; and, by every statute in the realm, thou shalt swing."

"You would not—you could not—you dare not accuse me of such a crime," urged Edward; "I came here to see——"

"Stop!" yelled the Ship-Chandler, with voice of thunder and eyes of fire. "Say not the word, breathe not the name, or, by Him to whom we must all make answer, I will slay thee like a dog, on the threshold where thou standest!"

"Amen!" exclaimed Patience Deth, taking courage. "Monstrous man! 'tis I whom you should

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kill. Fear not, dear Edward; he dare not harm thee! 'Twas I he came to see, Saul Deth. I, whom he came to utter love words to. I, thy wife. And I hearkened to him, for I loved him; yea, and Love him still."

She stood, beautiful and wretched, but brave. She made as though she would have bared her bosom to her husband's rage. She would have abandoned everything, sacrificed everything to save the life of the man whom she had been wicked enough to love.

"I have heard," the Ship-Chandler answered calmly, and glancing at his wife with a slow disdain, "of women silly enough to suck poison from the wounds of the knights that were their paramours, and even—the shameless wantons!—to assume the garb of the other sex, and mount the scaffold, and die the death in lieu of those on whom they had cast their longings. I know that women are mad and desperate enough to work these vanities. Some such stories of folly thou hast been reading, good wife of mine. But have no fear; I know that my honour hath ever been safe in thy hands, and that thou hast only invented this idle tale to save this wretched youth from the gallows-tree. I could not be jealous of thee, my Patience. Ho! ho! I say that this young man is a thief. I have taken him hiding among my merchandizes and my chattels; he is the captive of my bow and spear: and I will deliver him over to the constables and the headborough, that he may be laid in hold, and judged according to law."

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"Before Heaven, Sir," cried Edward, "I am innocent."

"Thou liest," replied the Ship-Chandler, coolly and impassibly.

Craven as he was, the insult made the blood mantle to the young man's cheek. He clapped his hand to his side, as though to draw his sword; but he had no weapon there, and, with an impotent expression of rage, he wrung his hands and bent his head, voiceless.

"I say thou liest!" said the Ship-Chandler. "Move not! speak not! I have thee at my mercy. I am strong and well-armed"—he flung open his coat and showed his pistols—"in my own house and mine own right. Thou art defenceless, naked, and unready. Endeavour not to conceal thy guilt by useless denial. Tempt not Heaven with vain asseverations. But, if thou wilt and canst lift up thy voice, answer me, Edward Claryon—what hast thou done with my twenty thousand pounds?"

"Twenty thousand pounds?" murmured the young man, gazing, in blank amazement, at his foe.

"Ay, twenty thousand pounds, lawful money of our Sovereign lord the King. Some of it in pieces of gold, and some in bills of the Bank of England, and all safe in my strong chest when I left this room two hours since; and now stolen away from me."

"I vow, I swear that I never heard of—never saw such a sum in your possession," replied Edward, eagerly.

"Swear not at all," returned the Ship-Chan-

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dler; "the money is gone, and thou whom I find concealed in my warehouse, thou only canst be the thief."

"But search me, search me!" cried the young prisoner, stung to desperation by this unmerited accusation. "Turn out my pockets, strip me to the bare, and see if I have so much as a farthing token belonging to you, or even to myself, about me?"

"Bah!" sneered the Ship-Chandler; "think you, young Sir, that such a defence will avail you aught? Your accomplices were by, and you handed the ill-gotten spoil to them, remaining here in the hope that other valuables might fall in your way."

"But he came alone," interposed Patience; "he was utterly alone, I protest; and, moreover, had you not the key in your own custody? Who but you, or Solomon Weevil your partner, could have had access to the money chest?"

"Clever, pretty Mistress Deth," retorted her husband, "you do protest too much. Fool, dost thou think I will entertain such a trivial objection as an answer? I say that yonder prelatical and rebellious hound, came like Barabbas, that was a robber, and broke into my counting-room, and stole away my gold, and rifled my treasure casket, THUS."

Quick as lightning almost, he rushed to the chest, and with a crowbar which he had kept concealed in his sleeve, began to wrench and batter at the locks of the chest. He flung the smaller casket—the lid open—violently on the floor, and trampled

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on it till the hinges gave way. Then he threw the crowbar towards Edward Claryon; it rolled towards him with a jangling jar, and all but crushed his foot. And then the Ship-Chandler crossed his arms on his desk, and regarded his wife and his enemy with a devilish grin; and then the unhappy Edward, quite broken down, hid his face in his hands and began to sob; and then Mistress Deth wished more than ever that she had a pistol, that she might shoot Saul Deth, as he stood there, grinning.

The sobs of the young man broke painfully on the new silence. Poor dastard! it was not, perhaps, his fault that he could not cope with the relentless man who, with almost demoniacal cunning, had fixed this dreadful crime upon him. Impulsive and inexperienced, it needed little to make Edward exaggerate all the dangers of his position. Could he have conferred with Patience, her acuter sense might have suggested some excuse, some loophole of escape; but he was dammed up in a corner, and he had not the courage to stand at bay. In his troubled perception the chain of evidence of having committed the robbery seemed clear and complete. There was the chest with its battered locks. There was the crowbar at his feet. There was he shoeless—for Patience had removed his shoes to dry them at the fire—in apparel unbecoming his rank, at night, and in a place that was not, surely, fitting for a love assignation. He was mean enough to betray the woman who had trusted him; but whom was he to utter his treason to? who would believe his story? Perhaps some new freak of vindictive madness

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would seize the Ship-Chandler, and he would slay him, as he had threatened—or, at least, wound him. He feared everything: death, wounds, exposure, punishment. He cursed the hour in which he had ever seen that fair woman. He accused her, in his own false, fleeting heart, of having delivered him over to the wrath of yonder bloodthirsty Puritan. Women had done such things before, he thought. He had been watched. He had been followed. There had been a trap laid for him, and he had fallen into it.

Indeed he had—a trap most skilfully contrived was the one in which he had been taken; but it was not devised by the hands to whose cunning he attributed it. Poor Simnel Coxworthy had been the first, all unwittingly, to compass his destruction; and the Ship-Chandler had taken up the clue, and followed it surely and stealthily until the game was caught.

As for the woman—as for Patience Deth—she had cast herself into a chair, and sat moaning and swaying herself to and fro. She felt that of herself she could do nothing—that any statement she made, were it even received, would not be credited. In concert with Edward, means might have been found to avert the danger, to disprove the charge. It was now too late. The worst had come, and must be borne; and the best and only thing she could do was to wait for the upshot, however terrible it might be. In two short hours two strange lights had broken in upon her. One showed that the man she loved was a coward, and unworthy. The other

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that the man who, she thought, loved her with such a fond weakness, was as cruel as a tiger, and had a heart as hard as the nether millstone.

"Edward Claryon," the Ship-Chandler said, slowly and distinctly, when he had glutted himself with the survey of the man whom fate had thrown into his power.

The wretched heir of Claryon Pleasant looked up, and his lips essayed to form a response.

"As I conceive," went on Saul Deth, still in measured accents, "thou dost not wish to be conveyed hence by tipstaves and catchpoles to be flung into the dungeons of the Tolzey, there to lie, with fifty pounds' weight of iron on thy legs, and surrounded by all the ribald stealers of men's gold and the blood-stained takers of men's lives, until the time shall come for thee to be arraigned before the arbiters of justice as a midnight housebreaker."

"I do not," replied Edward, in broken tones.

"Nor that I should gash thee with swords, or shoot at thy limbs with pistol bullets—as I will surely do, if the occasion demands, raising, if it need be, the entire neighbourhood, and relying for my defence for that I found thee here in shameful plight, lurking in my wareroom, and that, taking thee for a thief, I fell upon thee to slay thee as the law allows; but leaving it to Mistress Deth, my good and faithful wife here, to clear thee of being a thief under the plea that thou art her gallant."

"N—no—no," said, with a shudder, the son of Sir Roger Claryon. In that one word he swept away the last lingering particles of love for him

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which yet had their abiding place in the heart of Patience Deth.

"I see," remarked the Ship-Chandler, "that thou art not one of the men of war—children of Belial rather,—that hold life cheap, and will fight the good fight even if they get their crowns cracked and spill their best blood for it. Rather art thou one of the vermin foxes, to whose tails wise men may bind fire-brands wherewith they may light themselves the way to gain and glory. But I will have compassion on thee, albeit thou art weak and wicked, and hast worked me deadly wrong. Say, Edward Claryon, art thou ready to take steps whereby thou mayest save thine honour and thy life,—truly not of great value as marketable commodities, but which perchance may be to thee priceless? Life and honour are both in my power, to give or to take away; but I am merciful, and thou mayest ransom them if thou wilt. I say again, art thou ready to do this thing?"

"I am—I am," faltered the bewildered Edward.

"Then," pursued the Ship-Chandler, coming away from his desk, and standing opposite his victim and regarding him with eyes of avidity, "thou wilt confess that thou didst steal this money."

"Oh no! I cannot—I will not make so horrible a confession."

"I say YEA," persisted the Ship-Chandler, raising his voice menacingly. "Remember, life and honour are in the scale; remember that with thee it is either the pistol or the gallows."

"For life and honour I would do anything," the craven exclaimed. "So be it, then: I took——"

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"Stole!" suggested the Ship-Chandler.

"Stole, then, your money: which, so help me Heaven——"

"Tush! young man. Profane not the name. Heaven only helps them who help themselves; and I am helping myself with a vengeance. You admit, then, that you have robbed me of this gold?"

"I do; since you will have it so."

"A candid confession, and, truly, an honourable one for the heir of the proud Claryon of Claryon Pleasant. But this is not enough. It might be said, with some show of reason, that I had extracted the avowal from thee under threats and duresse. Therefore shalt thou take a pen and dip it in this ink, and write upon this paper which I set before thee that which I shall dictate."

"Never!" the young man cried in heart-rending tone. "Oh! Master Deth, urge me not to this dreadful pass. I cannot do what you wish."

"Thou canst do it easily. With far greater ease than thou couldst have broken open the locks of yonder strong chest. See, here are writing tools; there is a seat. Bend thy body, and fashion thine hand to the desk, and I will dictate."

Edward Claryon looked imploringly at Patience, as if for advice or assistance. But in her face he could descry nothing but a cold, stony expression of rigid contempt. She sat with her hands grasping the arms of her chair, erect and motionless like a beautiful statue, but withering him still with those scornful eyes.

The young man, with a deep sigh of shame, went

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as he was bidden to the desk, and took the pen and looked inquiringly at the Ship-Chandler. He by this time had shifted his position, and stood opposite his wife's chair, and ever and anon plunged his eyes, so to speak, into hers.

"Write," cried Saul Deth.

"I am ready," was the reply.

"I, Edward Claryon, of Claryon Pleasant," he began, "gentleman"—he laid an ironical stress on this word,—"do hereby confess, acknowledge, and declare, that on the night of Monday, the sixteenth of August last past, I, the said Edward Claryon, not having the fear of the Lord before my eyes, but being moved by the instigation of the Devil, did feloniously and burglariously break into the warehouse of Saul Deth, Citizen and Ship-Chandler, at Longport, in this county, and did then and there steal, rob, and convey away from a strong-chest in the counting-room of the said warehouse a certain sum of money, in bank-notes and gold, to wit, twenty thousand pounds——"

"Merciful Heavens!" cried Edward, throwing down the pen; "I cannot continue this monstrous fable."

"Write," returned the Ship-Chandler; "it is better to utter fables than to hold up one's hand to an indictment in a hanging matter. How far hadst thou written?"

"To 'bank-notes and gold,'" the young man answered, quite cowed by his merciless adversary.

"Write, then, 'twenty thousand pounds,'" continued the Ship-Chandler.

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"It is written."

"Excellent! Thou wouldst make a capital scrivener. Now go on."

"I am ready."

"And I, Edward Claryon, do further confess and declare that I have spent and squandered the same and said sum of twenty thousand pounds."

"How should the youth have spent the money?" Mistress Deth asked, in her cold, stony voice.

"Pshaw! how should I know?" replied the Ship-Chandler; "I am not used to the ways of gentlefolks. He may have spent it in horse-racing, or cock-fighting, or cross and pile, for aught I know or care. Hast thou written 'twenty thousand pounds?'"

"I have; and may God forgive you."

"Amen!" answered the Ship-Chandler, with mechanical sanctimoniousness; "we all stand in need of forgiveness, none less than I do; and even the most virtuous of wives here, may have something to be pardoned for. How sayest thou, sweetheart?"

But Patience Deth neither spoke nor stirred. She kept her eyes fixed on the coward who was signing his honour away, and vainly thinking to save it.

The Ship-Chandler approached the desk, and looked over Edward's shoulder.

"Thou hast done my bidding," he said, "and but two little things more remain to be done. Thou didst pray Heaven to forgive me, do thou now end thy confession by a supplication for mercy. Write:

"And I do hereby express my hearty repentance

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for the crime I have committed, and I do implore the forgiveness of God and man."

"Can you write *that?*" Mistress Deth asked of her lover, slowly and painfully addressing herself to speech, and her lips quivering with scorn.

"It is written," the Ship-Chandler remarked calmly, still looking over the young man's shoulder. "Now for the last act," he pursued, "to complete this merry document. See there," he said, putting his finger to the base of the paper? "Sign thy name there. Sign it boldly, as a gentleman should. Sign it in full, 'Edward Claryon.'"

With fingers that were clammy and that shook as though their owner had the palsy, the heir of Claryon Pleasant did as he was commanded, and signed the dastardly confession of a crime of which he was as innocent as a child unborn.

He had scarcely finished the last stroke of his signature, when the Ship-Chandler clutched the paper, hastily blotted it, and thrust it into his bosom.

"It is past midnight," he said, "and I have far to go. Young Sir and Madam, by your leave, you must keep your own sweet company for three or four hours. In the dalliance of converse, you may find the time pass pleasantly, but your dalliance must take place here; for, of a verity, ye must both remain in this counting-room until my return. There is plenty of candle left in the lantern, and, for the nonce, ye must do without wine or sweet eates."

As he spoke he carefully locked the door of the

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counting-room that gave on to the staircase of the dwelling-house. Then retreating, but with his face turned toward his wife and his enemies, and his gaze of hatred still on them, he reached the threshold, said slowly, "Farewell!" closed the outer door of the counting-room, locked it, and placed the keys in his bosom. Patience had never stirred. Edward had hidden his face in his hands, and was crouching on the desk, sobbing again, like a punished child.

"They will scarcely have an appetite for love passages, now," thought the Ship-Chandler; "it is better so than to have killed him. I will not have his blood on my head. There is ample time yet before me. Those accursed drafts shall be paid, and then——"

He did not complete the sentence, even in thought: but, wrapping the boat-cloak which he had worn coming from Bartle Ferry about him, opened the heavy door of his warehouse, and went out into the night.

CHAPTER VII.

CLARYON PLEASANT.

So he and she were left together, with the key turned upon them. Twenty-four hours since such permitted license would have seemed happiness too exquisite almost to be dreamed of, and beyond human possibility to be recognised. Now it had come. No more discoveries were to be dreaded;

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no more concealments were necessary. They had no secrets to keep. For Saul Deth had of his own free will left them together, and they might hold what discourse they pleased.

You have seen a child who has just passed from under the cruel endurance of his master's chastisement. The tormentor has worked his will upon him, and with exhortations to amendment in which a kind of grim sarcasm seems to be mingled has taken his rôd and himself away. Execution is past, and the boy is free and under no duresse, but for those burning stripes. You have seen him crouching there, on a desk, his face in his hands, his hair all tumbled, his gear all disarranged, quivering, shuddering, sobbing, despairing in his anguish and his shame. Thus Edward Claryon looked, thus Edward Claryon felt when the iron hand of the Ship-Chandler was taken off him—when his pain was over, and his humiliation, which promised to be eternal, had begun.

The faintest spark of miserable hope that could arise within him was that he might remain there for ever, or that Saul Deth might drop down dead before he reached Claryon Pleasant, for thither, his conscience told him but too plainly, the footsteps of his enemy were bent. But the first eventuality he knew to be impossible, the last was far beyond the bounds of probability. The cruel man would reach his father's house. The great, false self-accusation would be made known; he would return in triumph; the bearer, perhaps, of his disinheritance, or of the old man's curse. He had not courage to

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kill himself. He knew that. With but a grain of valour in his craven heart he would have slain himself an hour ago, or had a tussle for life and honour, man to man, hand to hand, foot to foot, with the Ship-Chandler. He felt how that, had he a weapon with him, and were Saul there, he could engage him, and combat with him unto the death. Why had he not thought of such things before? He was young and lusty, and inured to all athletic exercises, and his foe was but a spare, shrivelled, crookbacked thing—a water drinker, a psalm singer, a desk worm. But he had let the time go by, and he had signed away his honour to preserve his life. Poor wretch! it was not, perchance, so much his fault as Nature's, that he was an arrant poltroon. Some men are stout of heart and valiant in head, and are dastards only in the legs. 'Tis those pestilent lower members of theirs that run away with them, willy-nilly, from the battle; and when they have recovered their breath after a good hard scamper, they feel for awhile as brave as Agamemnon, until the enemy appears in sight again, when their plaguey legs once more take alarm, and run away with them *de novo*. Such involuntary white-feather bearers should be allowed to fight by proxy, and to be brave at a distance; but I am afraid that in the case of Edward Claryon, heart, head, and locomotive muscles were all as weak as water, and that his legs were as cowardly as his soul.

Thus he continued feebly moaning and shuffling, and spasmodically stamping his feet against the floor: not daring for a long time to look up, know-

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ing, as he did, who was watching him. And the hours passed away, and the morning came.

Four had just struck. The storm had long since subsided; but the night, for the season of the year, was bitterly cold. In a spacious and handsome bed-chamber, in the antique manor-house of Claryon Pleasant, sat its owner, Sir Roger Claryon. The old man was suffering under an access of gout. His temper, never one of the sweetest, had showed, more than was usual, that night signs of violent exacerbation, and if anything beyond nature and the gout could have made the tenor of his mind glide from the ill-humoured into the ferocious, it would have been the intelligence of his son's flight, which the trembling domestics, after having kept the fact concealed as long as was possible, had been at last compelled to convey to him, shortly after midnight.

Sir Roger Claryon had stormed in a manner frightful to hear and to behold. He had threatened to discharge all his attendants. He had overwhelmed Jonas Webb, his ancient and faithful body servitor, with maledictions and reproaches. He had sent runners out into the park and adjoining village, and far on the road to Longport, in pursuit of the runaway. He had commanded them, in his frenzy, to scour the copses; to drag the moat and fishpond; to beat the very partridge covers even; to take out swords and fire-arms; to bring the rebellious boy back to him, alive or dead. He vowed that he would have him tied hand and foot, that he would

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sell him a slave in the plantations, that he would lash him to death with his hunting whip. And then he wept, and bemoaned his unhappy fate, and declared that he was the wretchedest and most to be pitied of fathers. And as relays of servants came back from time to time, as he had bidden them, to tell him that their search had been in vain, the awful thought came over him and froze his marrow, and bedewed his brow with a cold perspiration, that perchance he might never see his only son alive again—that by his violence and harshness he had driven him to desperation, and that he had committed suicide.

In this pitiable state, racked by the pains of a cruel disease, and moaning with mental anguish, the high born and wealthy Sir Roger Claryon sat in his great arm-chair, a bane to himself and those around him. He could not bear his bed, and had been removed from that couch of thorns to the chair, where, with his swollen leg bandaged, he sat, or rather lay half-extended, fretting, and tossing, and gasping, and ever and anon bursting into torrents either of passionate invective or querulous complaint.

It was four o'clock; and not a tittle of intelligence had yet been received of the fugitive, when the ancient body servitor, Jonas Webb, entered the bed-chamber, and announced that a stranger desired to speak with Sir Roger on business of life and death.

"And I think," continued Jonas, "albeit it is an unseemly hour, and the man has an evil look, that he brings news of Master Edward to your honour."

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"Were he the foul fiend himself," exclaimed the old baronet, peevishly, "I would see him. He would not dare to cross the threshold of Claryon Pleasant at such a time had he not something of moment to communicate. If he comes on a fool's errand, he shall be well ducked in the horsepond, and well drubbed by the keepers' cudgels, and will thus get something for his pains. Have him up, Jonas Webb, and confound you for a dunder-headed old driveller."

Jonas went away muttering that he was sure his young master had been either kidnapped by the rascally fresh-pork dealers of Longport, or else that he had fallen across a press-gang. He was not long gone, and returned with a man slightly under the middle stature, and wrapped in a cloak. This, with the slouched beaver he wore, he flung off, and revealed a harsh, worn countenance, cast in a rigid mould, and surrounded by hair that had been once black, and that was much disordered, and an athletic and strongly-knit but slightly bowed figure.

"You have news of my graceless son?" Sir Roger asked, eagerly.

"Be he graceful or graceless," answered the man who had worn the cloak, "I have news of him; I have a letter from him, here."

"Where is he?"

"At my house, in Longport."

"Does he know of your coming?"

"If he is wise he might guess it."

"Tell him," roared the baronet, "that I cast him

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off. Tell him that I disinherit him. Tell him that I will never look upon his face again. Tell him that I know all about his wretched and degrading commerce with the simpering wanton who is the wife of the chandler's-shop man on the quay at Longport. Tell him this, do you hear, sirrah?"

"I hear," answered the man whom he addressed, grinding his teeth. "I hear, too, that curses go out and sometimes come back again. Will it please your honour to look at the letter I have brought?"

"It is scarcely worth while to read the young rascal's scrawl," the baronet said, with affected indifference, although he was burning to read the contents of the sheet of paper which, with quivering hand, his interlocutor extended towards him. "I suppose he is begging forgiveness, the madcap reprobate; but I'll trounce him, I warrant you. Here, you may give me the paper."

"We must be alone," the man with the harsh features remarked, sternly. "Not for all that you are, Sir Roger Claryon, of Claryon Pleasant, will I consent to your looking at this paper in any other presence save my own, were I torn to pieces in defending my hold upon it. Bid your servant leave us. Hesitate not, old man. It concerns the honour of your family far more narrowly than you think for."

"Jonas," said Sir Roger, "leave the room."

He spoke in so arbitrary a manner, that the ancient servitor did not dare to disobey him. He accordingly quitted the apartment, not without grumbling between his teeth that he liked not the

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looks of the strange man, and that he was sure some evil would come off. He withdrew, but remained on the landing, out of earshot, as he imagined, for he would have scorned eaves-dropping, but not sufficiently far off to avoid hearing these words uttered in a resonant voice.

"Sir Roger Claryon, I am Saul Deth, the Ship-Chandler."

There ensued a silence which might have lasted for a minute; then the ancient servitor could not help drawing a little nearer to the door. For ten minutes longer a low angry murmuring, as of two voices took place. Then suddenly he heard a horrid yell and a heavy fall, and no longer able to restrain his fears, Jonas Webb rushed into the bed-chamber, and found Sir Roger Claryon in a death-swoon on the floor, and bending over his prostrate form, with an expression of infernal triumph in his face, was SAUL DETH, THE SHIP-CHANDLER.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEMESIS.

BUT Sir Roger Claryon was not dead. For many minutes, indeed, his scared and terrified domestics thought that life had departed from that aged and enfeebled frame. Jonas Webb summoned other servants to his aid, raised his master from the ground, and laid him on the bed. Restoratives were freely applied; his limbs were chafed; his

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chest was rubbed with cordials; and, after a time—a time of critical lingering between life and death, Sir Roger Claryon recovered his consciousness. This was just prior to the arrival of the surgeon from the neighbouring village, who, as he mounted the stairs, discreetly took occasion to prescribe to the housekeeper a course of treatment directly contrary to that which, having already been put into operation, had brought the Baronet to his senses. The medical gentleman, finding that he had been forestalled by nature, contented himself—after a long examination of the patient, and a long and strictly professional course of head-shaking, lip-pursing, and watch-consulting—with drawing out an elaborate prescription, of which the ordinance was in precise contradistinction to his foregone advice proffered to the housekeeper on the staircase. This—the prescription, not the advice—he, with a voice of authority and a look of infinite wisdom, commanded should be forthwith made up at the nearest apothecary's. The nearest laboratory of such a licensed drug-vendor happened, fortuitously, to be attached to his own dwelling house. So he departed, smiling, and looking wiser than ever—a very owl of Minerva in black camlet, ruffles, and gold-rimmed spectacles, and hastened home to wake up Lobbin Scrough, the country lout who served him as groom, gardener, valet, and dispenser of medicines, in order to incite that youth—aged eighteen, red-headed, tongue-tied, and semi-idiotic, but very useful with horses—to scrape out the mortar, in which it is to be feared boluses for

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cattle were not unfrequently brayed—previous to the saturation of new medicaments.

So while this adept in curative science—this West-country Galen, and discreet disciple of Hippocrates was journeying homewards, and building in the air castles of which the foundations were in fees, and the superstructure in columns of figures for physic, all of the *£. s. d.* order, the old man lay gasping and murmuring on his bed; his lamp alight, indeed, but with a very pale, flickering flame.

The first words he uttered when his eyes were opened, and his tongue could obey the volitions of his mind, and give forth coherent speech, were in the form of an inquiry.

"Where is that man?" he asked.

"May it please your honour—" Jonas Webb began, in deprecatory tone.

"Surely your honour's worship—" the housekeeper struck up simultaneously.

"Where is the man?—where is he?" the Baronet repeated, as peevishly if not so stormily as of yore.

"I am here, Sir Roger Claryon," the Ship-Chandler suddenly made answer. "What would you with me?"

He had remained there, behind the heavy drapery of the bed, unnoticed amidst the general confusion. He might have proved a better leech than the country doctor, had he so chosen, for he had that in his keeping more potent than any pill or potion they could give a sick man. But he had kept silence. Now he started forward, rugged and morose, his dress all soiled and tumbled with night

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wandering, his hair tangled, his eye on fire; and his harsh voice grated through the bed-chamber as that of a bird of bad omen.

To the horror and amazement of his retainers, Sir Roger Claryon once more expressed his peremptory desire to be left alone with the very person whose proceedings, so far as was apparent, had already gone within a hair's-breadth of costing him his life. In vain did the white-headed Jonas Webb remonstrate. In vain did the other servants, backed by the housekeeper, with shrill tongue and voluble respect, clamour earnest dissuasion. The only notice of these appeals taken by Sir Roger was to swear a great oath, as well as he could for weakness, and to declare that he was his own master, and the master of those about him—that he was in his own house, and on his own manor—and that he would likewise be master of those tenements and hereditaments. He even raised himself on the bed, and, catching at his crutch, feebly brandished it for a moment, declaring, in a voice half growling and half piping, that he would be obeyed, or know the reason why. Was he to be argued with, forsooth? Was he to be gainsaid by these sorry knaves, these saucy rascals? He would strip them of their liveries, and turn them from the house. He would cudgel them, kick them, and so forth; he would—and then he sank on his bed, exhausted, and the crutch slid from his shaking hand and fell down on the floor of the bed-chamber with a clang. Anon, he raised his head, and sharply bade Jonas Webb remember that he was a justice of the peace, too, and would commit every man

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woman, or child who dared to disobey him. A positive man, Sir Roger Claryon, and one that would have his own way. I believe that had it been his supreme hour then, he would have bullied Death, and with the very rattle in his throat defied the grisly one, and threatened to put him in the stocks for a vagabond, having no settled place of abode. For Death is the king of the gipsies, and has a settlement in no parish; but visits all, from St. George's, Hanover-square, to St. Giles's.

"But to-morrow—this afternoon—an hour hence, even," urged Jonas Webb.

The Ship-Chandler unfolded his arms.

"I brought him a paper from his son," he said. "There it lies." He pointed to it. "He read it, and after some words, rising in an access of rage to strike at me, as I perpend—I am glad he did not succeed—he over-balanced himself, and fell into the swoon in which you found him. But I got no answer to the missive; and until I am answered, by all the Claryons since the Conqueror, I will not budge from this spot, nay, not if my flesh be hacked from off my bones, and my feet sawn off at the ankles."

A querulous groan from the bed seemed to express something like approval of this resolve. At any rate the Baronet immediately afterwards repeated his commands that the apartment should be cleared; and, with many misgivings, Jonas Webb signalled to his subordinates to obey the behest and follow him.

"And goodness grant," the old man muttered, as

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he closed the door behind him, "that the ill-favoured hound may have better tidings to tell in this fresh talk; for, of a surety, if my master have another fit, and fall into such a swound as that I found him in, he is a dead man."

So now they were alone again; and Sir Roger beckoned the Ship-Chandler to approach his pillow. He was even so wondrously civil to the plebeian seller of groceries as to motion him to a chair, which Saul Deth took very unconcernedly, as though he had been used all his life to sitting down in the presence of baronets and nobles of the land.

"Master Deth," said Sir Roger, in a hoarse, tremulous voice, "I am old, a very old man, and I have—I had rather—but one son. You have smitten me very hard. You come upon me when I am bereaved and sick, and you tell me that he whom I loved as the apple of my eye is a thief."

"I said it not," the Ship-Chandler slowly retorted. "He, thy son, is self-accused, and on his head be the confession. There is the paper. Do you deny his writing?"

"I cannot—I dare not—in honour. I know too well the hand of Edward Claryon."

"Am I not, then, as an honest man who has been foully wronged—how foully wronged I care not to tell—to make complaint of my loss to the father of the criminal?"

"Ay, you are right enough," Sir Roger replied, with an impatient moan; "but in your sordid soul even you must fain see the difficulty with which I could persuade myself to believe that my son, my

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heir, my pride, the hope and stay of my old age, has been guilty of the conduct of a felon."

"There are some things easy and some things difficult for sordid souls to see. I only know that he who is a disobedient son and a profligate, will not lightly stay his hand at other crimes—even to the worst."

"There, a truce to your moralities, man. No doubt but that you can find chapter and verse for everything. Enough that I am the father of a robber. The wretched boy has confessed everything; I deny it not. What would you have me do?"

"Sir Roger Claryon," Saul Deth made answer, "I am a trading man with concernments of moneys which must be answered, penny for penny, at the day and hour appointed with my brother traders. We low, hucksterly fellows have thus much honour among us, that if we fail in these our solemn engagements, we are cast out with opprobrium even from the shops and marts in which we carry on our pedling dealings."

"Granted, granted, most honourable sir. I ask again, what would you have?"

"To save your son, the heir of Claryon, from the gallows?"

"Yes; from the gallows," the Baronet repeated, grinding his teeth.

"He hath robbed me. Let restitution be made. Render unto me that which is mine own."

"And how much?"

"You have seen the sum the youth has confessed to. It is twenty thousand pounds."

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"Man alive!" exclaimed Sir Roger, "do you think I keep so much money in a strong box or an escritoir, that I can pay over twenty thousand pounds at a minute's notice, as though it were a twenty-pound bank bill, for a bet lost at a cock-fight?"

"You have vessels of plate here, both of gold and silver, I make no doubt; you have jewels here—precious gems that are heirlooms in your proud family; and surely there are tenants enow in Claryon Manor who would be happy to furnish their lord at a pinch."

"That may be as you say, but I cannot rout my tenants out of their beds at break of day to beg of them half-a-year's rent in advance."

"I care not," returned the Ship-Chandler, folding his arms again, and shutting his eyes as though to obviate further discussion, "how this money is gotten hold of, so long as it is delivered over to me without further delay; otherwise I will return to Longport and deliver over thy son to the ministers of the law."

The Baronet shuddered. "No, that must never be," he muttered. "Unworthy, despicable criminal as the boy is, the hangman must not handle a son of this house. Were ruin and starvation to stare me in the face, this sacrifice must be made and this disgrace averted. "Ship-Chandler," he continued, "you shall have your due to the uttermost doit. Restore that fatal paper, and I will give you an order on my money-scrivener in Longport for the money."

If Sir Roger Claryon had been wise in his gene-

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ration, he would, so soon as he had recovered from his swoon, have bidden his servants seize and burn the document which placarded his son's guilt, and which had lain unregarded on the floor. That mute yet eloquent witness destroyed, he might have defied the Ship-Chandler to do his worst. It was too late now. The very mention of the paper reminded Saul Deth of its value to his purpose, and before he returned an answer to the old man, he picked the precious statement from the ground, and thrust it into his bosom. Then he made speech:

"The money for it, and then the paper is yours."

"Extortioner!" grumbled Sir Roger.

The old man, however, by this time appeared to have made up his mind to get through his disagreeable task without further demur. He merely requested Saul Deth to sound a silver hand-bell which lay near him on the table, and everything should be ordered as he desired. He then concealed his face in the pillow, and preserved a haughty silence until Jonas Webb appeared in obedience to his summons. Him he commanded to bring writing materials, a lighted taper, and a certain ebony casket from a bureau, of which he gave him the key, to his bedside. This being done, Jonas was again commanded to leave the room, but to remain this time within call; and the ancient servitor accordingly departed, apparently much relieved to find that his master had not yet been strangled, stabbed, or poisoned by the terrible stranger. By long and painful efforts the Baronet raised himself to a sitting posture; nor, at this stage, did he disdain the moody assistance of Saul Deth, who, by his peevish directions, propped

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him up with pillows, and placed the writing materials within his reach.

It took a considerable period for Sir Roger Claryon to accomplish his repugnant task. He pished and pshawed from time to time, darting vengeful glances at the Ship-Chandler; but at last he came to an end, asked for the lighted taper, and nervously pulling his great signet ring from off his finger, first sealed the letter which with infinite labour he had penned, and then a somewhat voluminous packet, which he had made up by enclosures of papers taken from the ebony casket spoken of.

"Take these to Longport," he said, sinking back exhausted, "and your pound of flesh will be given up to you. The letter contains instructions to Barzillai Brewer, my money-scrivener, in the Tanpits. You know the covetous dog well. The other packet holds certain leases and title-deeds which he may require as security. Now, give me that accursed paper, and go."

"But what security have *I*," Saul Deth cautiously began, "that the letter you have written contains——"

"'Sdeath, sir!" broke in the old Baronet, "do you doubt the word of an English gentleman? Stay," he added, "if you are not satisfied, I will break the seal of the letter and write a fresh one, which you may read before it is closed."

"Enough! Sir Roger Claryon," said the Ship-Chandler, 'I did but try you, and am content to take your word. Here is the paper signed by the youth now in durance in my counting-room."

The old man clutched at the paper extended to

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him, and, with trembling fingers, tore it to fragments, which he hid beneath his pillow.

"Your son shall be released the moment I reach Longport," Saul Deth observed, as he rose to depart.

"I care not," was the reply; "the evidence is destroyed."

"I have but one favour more to ask," the Ship-Chandler continued.

"What is it?—more money?"

"Not at all; I have sufficient for all my needs. It is that from your extreme bounty you would issue your commands for a horse to be lent to me wherewith to reach mine home. I came hither on foot, and the roads are in terrible condition."

"Ring that bell again, and my servants shall saddle the swiftest horse in my stable for your conveyance. Only, let me see the last of your hateful face."

"Many thanks, my sir," the Ship-Chandler replied, with a grim bow. "It will be long, I promise you, ere you see my face at Claryon Pleasant again. Ere I go, may I inquire whether you may have any message that I may deliver to your son?"

"My curse!" yelled the infuriated Baronet; and Sir Roger Claryon turned his face to the wall, and, beyond a brief order to the servant who entered the room, to saddle Bay Chester, he spake no more.

Never, indeed, on this side eternity, did Sir Roger Claryon, of Claryon Pleasant, address himself to any speech that was coherent. He lay for days in a semi-lethargic state, taking drink, but no food whatever of a solid description, and quite indifferent

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at the end of the fourth day his nurse, the old housekeeper, alarmed at the sudden cessation of his stertorous breathing, bent over him, and found that he was dead. Clenched in his right hand, those who had to perform the last sad offices of humanity found some fragments of paper. Others—and these when put together must have revealed the signature of his son—he had chewed to pulp.

* * * * *

A swift hunter bore Saul Deth back into Longport. It was half-after-eight in the morning when he arrived there. He rode straight to the dwelling of Barzillai Brewer, the money-scrivener, and found that worthy at breakfast. He presented his credentials, and, after many piteous complaints of the hardness of the times, and careful conning of the securities he had brought with him, the man of business handed to the Ship-Chandler bank bills to the amount he required. With a heart that was on fire with delirious joy, Saul Deth remounted his horse and rode towards his home, leaving the money-scrivener in a deep perturbation of wonderment as to the motives which could have prompted Sir Roger Claryon to hand over so large a sum as twenty thousand pounds to the trader of the Trinidad Piazzas.

"Perhaps," mused Master Brewer, as he locked up the leases and title-deeds in a strong safe, "the young squire hath taken up money at interest of this hunks, and this vast sum is in payment of Master Edward's indebtedness. Ah! a cunning fox, a sly fellow is Saul Deth."

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The money-scrivener was nearer the truth than he imagined.

Saul Deth alighted at the door of his own house shortly after nine o'clock. No bills would be presented until ten, he knew; and he felt safe. To his surprise, he found the shutters of the warehouse had been taken down, and standing at the door were Simnel Coxworthy and GRIZZLY SAM LOVEDAY.

With fury he first thought that his prey had escaped him; but he had no sooner dismounted than Sam rushed up to him.

"Hurrah! Master Saul, hurrah!" he cried, "I've got it—I've got it all back."

"Got what back?" inquired the Ship-Chandler, with a scared look.

"The MONEY—the twenty thousand pounds," continued Grizzly Sam, almost beside himself with excitement. "Leastways, all except five hundred, which I left with that mangy hound, that he might have enough to go and hang himself with."

"Loveday, you are raving. Do you mean to say that——"

"I mean to say, Master of mine, that I prevailed on Nine Fathom Tom, of the 'Surly' lugger, to take me off yesterday in pursuit of the 'Black Harry' and your precious partner, Solomon Weevil. I mean to say that I boarded the ill-looking craft, and that I took old Manicuffs the constable from the Tolzey with me. I frightened Solomon Weevil so, with threats to take him on shore in custody, that he was only too glad to give up his plunder, with the exception of five hundred pounds, though

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I dare say the rogue has a pretty penny of his own besides."

"Samuel Loveday," the Ship-Chandler cried, in agonizing accents, "trifle not with me. You are certain that you have brought this money back?"

"Ay, ay, master. Nineteen thousand five hundred pounds. Sim and I have just counted it, and it is all safe and sound in the warehouse yonder."

"Then," said Saul Deth, the Ship-Chandler, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"Amen!" responded the porter, reverently uncovering his head, but gazing at his master with some amazement.

"Twenty thousand pounds," cried Saul, "twenty thousand! and twenty thousand more! That makes forty thousand. Oh, be merciful to me! be merciful to me, Heaven!"

He rushed to the door of the counting-room; he battered at it. He had forgotten the key. At last, by main force, he burst the portal open, and found Edward Claryon and Patience Deth sitting as he had left them. They had passed a weary night.

"Sir," said the Ship-Chandler to the young man, "you did me a cruel wrong, but I have injured you far more cruelly. Take this money, it belongs to you. I, who accused *you* of robbery, stole this money—stole it in the vilest and most treacherous manner from your father. From you I crave forgiveness, even as you may hope yourself to be forgiven."

As he spoke, he pressed the packet of bills he had

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received from the money-scrivener into Edward's hands.

He was not seen at Longport any more, and uncertainty hung over his subsequent life, and his end. 'Twas said by some that he went mad, and died howling in the Tolzey. Others would have it that he poisoned himself the same—mad—the very same' morning, and that his body was privately conveyed away and buried in the graveyard of his meeting-house at Bartle Ferry. But that I do not believe. Much more do I incline to the credence that he went abroad with his faithful servant, Grizzly Sam Loveday; that he busied himself during some years with mercantile affairs in the Far West; that he wrote from time to time, short and solemn, but still loving letters to his wife. But however this may be, of one thing I am certain: that Mistress Deth never married again, but wore the willow until her decease, when she was justly lamented as a charitable and pious lady. She would never be persuaded, after her husband's departure, or disappearance, or whatever it was, to hold any commerce with the dishonoured craven, Edward Claryon. I have heard that the graceless young man, after a long career of dissipation and prodigality, in which he almost entirely wasted his paternal estate, was fain to marry a shrewish spinster of low degree, and with a Chancery fortune; that he was soon separated from her, and made an end of it at last in the King's Bench prison, London, a sad, but wholesome example to all libertines and spendthrifts.

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THE LATE MR. D——.

A Curious Circumstance narrated by the Relict of the Abobe to

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

When I was a young girl we used to console the Lizzies, and 'Tildas, and Sophies, who bid good-bye to their teens without getting married, by telling them that they were only waiting for Mr. Right to come, and that he would be sure to come some day. Now I have been married, but, as a widow, might hope for another husband, for I am not forty. I was born in the year eighteen hundred and——; but never mind that; and, as the late King George III. said to Lord Byron, when they quarrelled about the "Lass of Richmond Hill"—a bold hussey, I daresay—give me "fair, fat, and thirty odd," I am thirty odd. I was always plump; and the late Mr. D——, Heaven rest him!—used to call me "Piggy" for sweetness. He was a tender man. As to fairness, I wear fronts now, and a cap. There's nothing but a *pack of servant girls and bold impudent rubbish* that come out in their braids, and scragups, and

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ringlets, and *à la Eugénie*, and things. I'd Eugénie them! But when I was a girl, Mr. Jones, of the Strand, that took the likenesses, said my hair was of the real golden auburn. It was of the rich *dark* gold colour; and I well recollect the late Mr. D—— kicking a boy dreadfully who followed us in the street once, and called me "wegetables," and wanted to know how long I had boiled my hair. We saw him trying a gentleman's pocket not five minutes afterwards. Mr. Jones ought to have known; and he said my hair was exactly like the something "Eliza's;"* and he put my miniature in the gold frame on the street door, between a fancy picture of Little Red Riding Hood—the pound of fresh butter painted beautifully—and a charming young officer of the Horse Guards in full uniform. The three matched so well, he said.

Now about Mr. Right. I'm a good-tempered body; but I should very much like to see Mr. Right walk into my circulating library, news-agent's, and general stationery warehouse, in Broadarrow Court, Leary-lane, and make me an offer of marriage. He'd soon find himself in the wrong box with Sarah Jane D——, I warrant. There's plenty of "young" persons in the court that would be glad enough of a visit from Mr. Right, I daresay; but I wouldn't have him if he had a guinea a minute; no, not if he was as rich as old Mr. Lumberhem, who's made forty thousand pounds out of flat-irons in the pawn-shop at the corner of Leary-lane. Let him

* Probably the Mona Lisa's.—Ed.

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go to Miss Brushemup, that keeps the day-school at No. 4, and dreams of gold rings and the marriage service in the Prayer-Book whenever she has supped on pickled pork. Let him go to Miss Gimp, the dress-maker, that tried—yes, basely tried—to inveigle the poor, dear, unprotected foreign gentleman at No. 8, who played so beautifully on the long brass thingumbob with the French name, and belonged to the band that performed before the Queen, and went off, owing five weeks, when there was three blankets and a doyley missed, let alone the carpet burnt into holes with tobacco cinders. If ever there was an angel with whiskers it was that man. Let him go to that artful thing at the pastry-cook's, with her sugar-and-water side curls, and her fine talk about marrying a captain in the Horse Dragoons, when he's only a *low common soldier* in a muff cap, and drinks half-pints of porter with *somebody else's money;* and I've seen her standing at the corner talking to him at disgraceful hours, and giving him sausage rolls and raspberry tarts, which he's put into that nasty ugly muff cap of his; and I'm sure Mr. Pastingpin ought to know of it. We don't want any Mr. Rights here, I can tell you. If a gentleman behaves *as* a gentleman, and takes my first floor and back kitchen unfurnished, or my second-floor front furnished, and pays his way without a latch-key and singing songs on the staircase at night, with heavy boots that wake you, I shall be glad of his company, and to give him a cup of tea; and I wouldn't demean myself to ask him to pay for the books out of the library he reads at

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night—no, not if he was to keep "Jack Sheppard" and "Zanoni" a fortnight. Nine years have I been in the same house, under the same landlord; and his rent's always been ready for him—laid out on the stage of the half-crown toy theatre, with Mr. Marks's scenes and characters, hours before he's called—with cake and cherry wine for him in the parlour, while we talk over the news, and I smell at the beautiful, beautiful bowpot he brings me, winter and summer, from his *country house* at Haverstock-hill. A pleasant-spoken gentleman, if ever one broke bread, is Mr. Micklemass, my landlord, and wears the handsomest waistcoats to be seen out of a tailor's window; and so delightfully washed, too, for a single gentleman. I don't want to be married at all. I've brought up a family of young children, and they're the pride and delight of my life. My husband was the best, the kindest, and most loving of men. He never gave me a cross look, much less a cross word, bless his dear heart! and I mean to be faithful to his memory. They don't make husbands every day like the late Mr. D——.

Here I am, then, in Broadarrow Court, Leary-lane, with four children. Patty, my eldest, going for sixteen, is apprenticed to the dress-making at Madame La Skirty's, in Regent-street; but no late hours for me. I fetch her home every evening to tea; and when she is eighteen I'll set her up in business for herself. Madame La Skirty says she will make a capital "first hand." She sha'nt make anything of the sort. I'll never have my Patty singing the "Song of the Shirt" over bread-and-

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scrape in a hot work-room, to toil at Duchesses' dresses till three o'clock in the morning. Joey, my eldest boy—(Mr. D——'s name was Joseph)—just turned eleven, is my right hand in the news-vending business. He knows every one of the railway stations, and is quite respected at Messrs. Smith and Sons. Then I've two little girls, five and six, who go to school every morning at Miss Brushemup's. I kept the shop a long time before the late Mr. D—— died; and it was in the sickly winter of 1854 that he was taken from me. He lies in Norwood Cemetery, in eleven feet of clay; and when my children are all well to do in the world, and perhaps when I have seen a grandchild or two old enough to climb on my knee and kiss me, I'll lay my bones, please Heaven, by the side of my good husband. I'm blessed in my children. Patty is the best girl that ever lived; and when the old gentleman poked his head under her bonnet in Regent-street one evening, as she was coming home rather later than usual—they said he was Lord Naughtimore, the great statesman you read about in the *Times*—she slapped his face so, that Patty declares she saw the marks of her fingers on his cheek under the gas-lamp. He cried out "Police!" the cowardly old good-for-nothing. I only wish I'd been there—but Rosa Colombina, my youngest, was bad with thrush at the time—I'd have policed him. Joey is one of the sharpest lads between Hungerford Market and St. Clement's Pillars; and though he is a little wild, and is too fond of pigeons, and will do the acrobats at home—I mean lying on the carpet with

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his legs up, and one of his little sisters balanced on the soles of his feet—the dear boy is as obedient and affectionate as any mother in the parish could wish. He pulls the funniest faces, too, does Joey; and sings a song called "Hot Codlins," and cries out "Here we are" so, that it would make you die of laughing. I can't imagine wherever he picks his comical ways up. As to my two youngest, if I could only break them of the habit of painting the characters in the illustrations to Mr. Dickens's books with the brightest colours—the subscribers often send Mr. Pickwick home with a pair of moustaches, and Mrs. Gamp with horns and a tail—I should have nothing to complain of. As to myself, you must know pretty well what I am like by this time. I didn't have too much schooling when I was young; but I think I have read every three-volume novel in my library five times over. How Sir Edward Bulwer's tales do make you shiver all over! What beautiful long words he uses! And his poetry, too! Then there's Mr. Lever, though he writes a little too much about horses, and not quite enough about love, for my taste. And that blessed young woman, Jane Eyre! And John Halifax, Gentleman! And all Mrs. Gore's novels—(I wish those twopenny-halfpenny shilling editions were all sunk at the bottom of the sea; they're ruining the circulating trade). As to Mr. Dickens, there isn't one of his novels but what the covers are half torn off, and half the last chapters wanting with reading. Some of the leaves are quite transparent with grease, and the customers send the books home all covered with

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brown spots, which Joey says come from beer—I say from tears. My two youngest play at Trotty Veck and the Artful Dodger, in the back parlour; and Patty took the "Christmas Carol" to Madame La Skirty's to read to the shop-girls nine months ago, and hasn't brought it back yet. I'm sure if it wasn't for reading so much, I shouldn't be emboldened to write this; but Mr. Sala, who drops in upon us in a friendly way, when he hasn't any paper to write an article in a hurry, and borrows a book sometimes, and wont hear of payment, says I shall be able to manage very well. Please put what I have written in the best part of the *Welcome Guest*, as I can push the publication, and Joey says he thinks it will sell well. But don't forget to have plenty of Love in the next number. There's nothing like it, after all; and there's a great run upon Love in Broadarrow Court.

I don't mind telling you, that it was on board a Gravesend steamboat, and in the year 1842, that I first became acquainted with the late Mr. D——. He was a fine handsome man then, though he didn't wear any whiskers. I'm sure he could have grown a lovely pair though, for his face was quite blue where he shaved. It was summer; and he wore a pink shirt, turned down over a sky-blue tie with gold sprigs. He had a buff waistcoat, with coral buttons, a light coat, lavender trowsers, white jean boots, and primrose kid gloves—a white hat, a geranium in his button-hole, and a perfect duck of a twisted whalebone cane with a silver knob and a long tassel. But the most striking part about him,

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after his close shaving and his beautiful white teeth, was the intense melancholy in his Eye. I was fond of reading, even then; and directly I saw him, I said to myself, that's a man who has read "Childe Harold" and the "Sorrows of Werter." I was in the dress-making line then, but had just come from a week's visit to my Aunt Chugget, who keeps the large crockery shop in High-street, Gravesend. I saw him, on deck, talking to the man who played the trombone. As he passed me, he gave such a sigh that I thought his heart was splitting. Little did I think that this melancholy individual was afterwards to be my Joey.

I had gone down into the cabin, feeling faint with the noise of the trombone and the sea—for they used to have sea a good way up from Gravesend in those days—and, when below, ordered a pint bottle of stout, which they have fresh every morning from the stores underneath London-bridge, and is really delicious, and a caraway-seed biscuit. He came and sat beside me, putting his white hat on the table. I think he had shrub, cold, and sighed dreadfully while he drank it. He insisted upon paying for my stout and biscuit, and when the steward gave him his change, he groaned. I asked if there was anything the matter with him, and he said he thought he had cockroaches in the heart. We talked a good deal in the cabin. I think I quoted a stanza from "Lalla Rookh"—that duck of a poem!—to him. He only sighed, and murmured "Variety." I don't think there is anything very sentimental in "variety," but he said it in such a

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tone, *and with a deep, deep expression*, that I burst into tears and fell in love with him on the spot. Within a week we were keeping company together. He told me his name was D——, but little else. Although I told him all about myself and my friends, and my Aunt Chugget, I did not seem to care, somehow, about knowing all the particulars in his case. If he had come to me as a lodger, now, of course I should have asked for references. He would never have had my first-floor front without, I promise you. But what girl really in love ever wanted references? My heart was unfurnished, and to let, and he took possession of it at once. He said that he was earning a good living. He dressed beautifully, and I believed him. Pauline Deschapelles did as much in the play when she married the gentleman who was only a market gardener. I was an orphan, and my own mistress, and I had my own furniture, and forty pounds in St. Martin's Savings' Bank. Some of the young dress-makers I knew laughed at me, and warned me against my folly; but I was certain that it was only through jealousy. 'Tilda declared that my mysterious Joey was a nobleman in disguise; but Sophy hinted that he might be a pickpocket. As to myself I had quite made up my mind. I went down on purpose to my Aunt Chugget at Gravesend, and told her that Joey and I were going to make one, and that I had already been asked twice in the church of St. Magnus the Martyr. Aunt was a good woman, but the rheumatism made her fractious, and she said that as I made my bed

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so I must lie on it. With this, I up and told her that I wasn't a housemaid, and hadn't been used to make beds; no, nor to scrub stairs either, and we had a thorough good quarrel. She threatened to leave all her money for the missionaries, and I dare say she would have done as she threatened; only the poor old lady failed three months afterwards for seven hundred pounds in the crockery business, and was obliged to go into the Pipkin-bakers' almshouses at Northfleet, where she is to this day; and many's the pound of tea and sugar that's been sent her, good old soul, from her affectionate niece in Broadarrow Court.

Joey and I were married. He hired a gig on the wedding day, and took me for a drive to Epping-forest. When the waiter at the road-side inn we put up at asked him what he would have for dinner, he answered, with a groan, that he should like some funeral baked meats. He was a darling man; but very, very strange. What do you think? that as we came home in the evening we saw a little girl sitting on a door-step crying, and I was pitying her, and wondering what was the matter with her, he said with a sigh—

"It's nothing, Mrs. D——. I dare say her mother's given her a halfpenny to buy a penn'orth of pudding, and she's lost it: that's all."

I went on with the dressmaking for a time till we'd saved enough money to furnish two rooms, and about a year after that we moved into the house I live in now, in Broadarrow Court. We began the shop quite modestly with a few quires of paper,

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penny bottles of ink, hoops, skipping ropes, and numbers of the *Family Herald* and the *London Journal*. But we got on by degrees, and shortly after Christmas, 1846, when Joey brought me home one day thirty-seven pounds with a melancholy air, and told me that he had made an "uncommon good haul," but that "bens" were nothing now a days, I wondered very much what a "ben" could be. We bought, at a tremendous sacrifice, the stock in trade, consisting of stationery and three-volume novels, of a gentleman over the water, who had got into trouble about not paying his creditors, and took afterwards to keeping a beer-shop, till he was had up for offering at his wife's throat with a cheese-knife. His name was Proudfoot, and he had the beautifullest eye and the manliest nose you ever saw.

What need is there for me to give you the history of a decent married woman's life for three years and a-half? I wouldn't trouble you even with mentioning such a thing if it wasn't for the awful—awful mystery that hung about my Joey. He was so *dreadfully* miserable. He ate and drank heartily, and liked hot suppers; but he groaned so horribly over his victuals, that it made me shudder to see him eat tripe, and his way of putting away beefsteak pudding was most distressing to my feelings. He used to start up sometimes in his sleep, and say that he'd "lost a farthing," but I'm sure I always turned his pockets out before he went to bed, and he'd never lost anything that I knew of. He was frightfully nervous, too, and when we were out walking,

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he would often start and cry out, "Here's a policeman coming," "There's a woman," and drag me down the next street, till he nearly pulled my arm off. Why should my Joey have been afraid of policemen and women? He never did anybody any harm; and his conduct, but for the sighing and groaning, and crying late at nights, secretly into his gin and water, was always most affectionate. He used to bring home as much as five or six pounds a-week on a Saturday, in *winter time;* but in the summer, it was never more than two ten. He used to be a little cheerfuller, too, in the summer, though he sighed a great deal; but as sure as November came round, he began to be miserably wretched, and used to complain of his back aching, and his joints creaking, and his head swimming, in the most heart-rending manner. Once he brought no money home for a month. It was August, and Joey said that he was "out of collar." He never dined at home on Christmas-day, and, to tell the truth, all Christmas week was purgatory in Broadarrow Court. In winter time he never came home till two in the morning, and then his supper with his weeping and groaning, which he did quite regular, made it half-past three or so before he got off to sleep. I would never allow a razor, or even so much as a penknife in the place for fear of accidents, and used to keep all my scissors locked up; and when Joey went to get shaved, which he did every morning, at Mr. Partlet's—who was quite a gentleman, Mr. P., and knew all the tip-top people, and had the play bills, quite genteel-like, round his shop, in Leary-lane—

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many's the time I've followed Joey unbeknown, and looked over the blind in the shop door, and watched my poor dear man to see that he didn't jog his throat against the razor, or choke himself with the lather. It used to puzzle me why all the gentlemen customers in the shop, whenever they saw Joey come in, should burst out laughing. I needn't tell you the dates of my dear little children's birth. I've got them all down in a fly leaf of "Fatherless Fanny," and locks of their hair pinned up in the last chapter of "Ada the Betrayed." If there was ever a fond father, it was the late Mr. D——; but he had some curious ways with his children, too. I think the only quarrel I ever had with him was when our little Joey was born, and Mr. D—— wanted the infant to be christened "Delphini." I said it wasn't a Christian name, or a proper name, and at last the dear old creature gave in to my wishes, and the child was called after its dear good father. It was Dr. Plachett, of Bartlett's-buildings, that saw me through all my troubles, and a kind, good gentleman he was, calling as often as he would have done on the very first quality, and only charging me half-price. It used to make me rather nervous, too, to see the way that Joey handled a baby. As a mother, I used to shiver in my backbone, for fear he was going to throw the dear innocent out of window. "Shall I put it in ze post zen?" he said, one day, in a tone would make your heart bleed, to our little Patty, when he was nursing her; and I shall never, never forget his starting up one night, as if he meant it, saying:—

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"After all, where's the harm of setting on a baby?"

I never could find out what my husband was. I could never find out what made him so miserable. I used to persuade him sometimes to go to the play to amuse himself, but he always shuddered even when I mentioned the name of a theatre; and said he would rather not, thank you. This was the more disappointment to me, as in my young days I was very fond of going half-price to the minors and seeing that dear Mr. Denvil. I declare that for anything I knew about it, the late Mr. D—— might have been a pirate, or a highwayman, or a resurrection man, or spring-heeled Jack, or the little unknown that used to marry widows and suck their blood. No; that was the vampire. Wasn't it the little unknown that tickled seven wives to death for doing needlework on a Sunday? I was so drove to desperation sometimes by this mystery, that I had thoughts of parting from Mr. D——, unless he up and told all; but for the sake of the dear children I kept to him. And he was so kind, too, when he wasn't groaning, the darling.

It was much later in my married life, and when Mr. D—— was quite changed—but this is the place to tell it notwithstanding—that I made, one day, an Awful Discovery. There was one big trunk my husband always kept locked, and never opened while I was in the room; but after he changed I've often seen him going out with bundles, which I supposed he'd taken from the box; but I didn't dare to ask any questions. One day he left this trunk un-

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locked; and I, woman like—who that's married, or single, for the matter of that, wouldn't have done the same?—opened it. My children were playing round me: I shall never forget it. I found in the trunk only a quantity of rags, a lot of white powder in a paper—was it arsenic, I wondered?—a couple of candle ends that looked as though they had been rubbed down to the wick against something hard, and THIS. This was a pair of—well—not drawers, nor pantaloons, decidedly not trousers, and you couldn't call 'em smallclothes. They were very large clothes. In fact, I'm a married woman, and well, it was a pair of Breeches; loose baggy things, with frills round the bottom, and made of white calico, sprinkled all over with great red spots like wafers.

"O, ma!" cried my youngest child, "it's wat de naughty men wear round Dzack in de Green."

I gave that youngest child a sound hiding on the spot. What was the meaning of those awful Breeches?

I told you that the late Mr. D—— changed. It was all on a sudden, and one Saturday night on the end of February, when he burst into our back parlour in Broadarrow Court—I must tell you that he threw his hat in before him, and then throwing a handful of gold and silver on the table, cried out—

"I've cut it, Piggy, I've cut it. That's the last. The ghost won't walk any more for Joey D——. Hooray!"

And then he kissed me, and the children all

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round—and then he went through a sort of dance—I never knew a man who could do so many things with his legs as he could—and sang a little song, with a chorus something like this :—

> " Rum tum, tiddy iddy, tiddy iddy,
> Rum tum tiddy umtee, row tow tow."

He was the merriest man after that : yes ; and for two whole years he didn't earn quite so much money a week ; *and he never told me what his business was ;* but how could I ask him ? He never sighed ; he never groaned ; he did nothing but laugh and chirrup, kiss the children, and bring home nice things for supper. He had quite changed his dress, too, as well as his ways, and wore nothing now but beautiful glossy black clothes. A tail coat, always. The only thing was that he drank a good deal more cold rum-and-water—he had given up gin—than was good for him, and that his nose, which had been a beautiful cream colour when we first kept company, grew to be a rich crimson one, of the shape they call bottle. He wore a good many pimples, too, and his eye was watery. But what were nose, pimples, watery eye, to me, who loved him so ? He sang the funniest comic songs till within a week of his death. Yes ; his death. My dear, dear, dear Joey died, and left me a sorrowing widow. He caught a cold one rainy day when he had gone out in a new suit of black, and perhaps it was the rum and water had settled on his lungs. But he took to his bed, and never left it but for the cemetery. He wandered sometimes when he was at the worst ;

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and said something about "sausages" and "red-hot pokers," and then he murmured some words about "late parties," and "something" being performed. But he died without disclosing his secret.

It was just three days after his funeral, I was sitting one afternoon in the back parlour, I had sent the children to play in a spare room upstairs, when a gentleman popped his head in at the door. I thought, perhaps it might be my landlord; but it wasn't. It was a gentleman quite as clean shaven as the late Mr. D—— used to be, who wore a white hat with a black band, a blue body coat with gilt buttons, a military stripe down his trousers, and who carried a cane with a glass top.

"Poor old chap," said this gentleman, quite kindly. "Poor old Joey, he was a first-rater, he was."

I knew the gentleman alluded to my late husband, and began to cry.

"Since the days of Grim, since the time of the original Joey, ma'am," the gentleman continued, "that man's equal has not been seen on the boards. But don't cry, mum, I've brought you twelve pound ten."

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you, sir," I answered, taking the money, "and thank you kindly for it; but may I ask to whom I am indebted for this kindness?"

"It was subscribed, ma'am," the gentleman replied, "not half an hour ago, by some professional friends of your late husband, in the bar parlour of the Crown tavern, Vinegar-yard. Your humble

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servant—Whautkini is my name, Whautkini of the T. R. D. L.,—was unanimously appointed hon. sec., and delegated to present you with this slight testimonial of condolence and esteem. If we had known it sooner, the money would have been here sooner; but Joey had left the profession for some time, and it was only by accident this morning that I heard of his death. I suppose you know what your husband's late profession was, mum?"

I shook my head in bewildered amazement.

"I thought so," said the gentleman in the blue body-coat, nodding his head as if he quite agreed with himself. "Just like Joey. Secretive, shut up Joey. Tight as an oyster, mum. But perhaps *you'd* like to know."

I faltered out "yes." I felt as if I was going to faint.

"Your husband, mum," he returned, "was, till he left the Theatre Royal Leary-lane two years since, *the very best* CLOWN *that's been seen on the boards since the days of Joey Grimaldi.*"

I fainted away at once. *My* Joey a CLOWN! It was this profession, then, that made him so miserable.

When I recovered, the gentleman in the blue body-coat was gone, but the money was still on the table.

The next day—wonders never come alone—two gentlemen, dressed exactly as my husband used to be, in full black, and with noses even redder than his, came into the shop and asked for me.

"Toby," said one of the gentlemen, a stout, dubby

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looking gentleman, to the other, who was thin and lank, "Toby, it's for you to speak."

"Wishin' it wasn't," said the other gentleman, "Mogford, as it's you that's a better hand at it. Mrs. D——," he went on, "we've come from the club."

"What club, gentlemen?" I asked.

"The club your late party belonged to, 'The Jolly Tressels.' It's a berryin' club, though those as belongs to it is given to berryin'. Ha! ha! But this aint business. I've brought you ten pounds, mum, from the club, most of which its members is shopmates, or was rather, of Joey D——."

"What shop?" I asked, quite scared.

"What shop!" echoed the gentleman called Toby; "What shop? Do you hear that, Mogford! Why, don't you know what your late husband's lay—his perfession was?"

"Not the least in the world, as I'm a lone widow," I answered.

"Well, that beats everything," Mr. Toby exclaimed. "A close man, a feller as could keep a thing dark was Joey D——. I'll tell you wot he wos, mum. He was a MUTE; and he died a Mute, universally respected."

"Two years and a arf in the service of Messrs. Ploomer and Atchment," continued Mr. Mogford. "Wos allers selected for the most respectable parties' funerals. 'Ow he came for to take up blackwork none of us never could find out. But he was the best and most melancolly Mute I ever see agin a door, a bustin his 'art with woe to see the knocker

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tied up; but he never would tell us where he lived, for if he had, Messrs. Ploomer and Atchment would have berried him for nothin.' "

I've finished. Please observe the address—The *Times* can be supplied quarterly.

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WILD MR. WILL.

A Story that was hushed up.

A CHRISTMAS party was gathered round a fire—a leaping, roaring, jovial coal fire—and indulging in the orthodox amusement of story-telling. We had an ancient housekeeper among us, who had known some of us ever since we were born, and the papas and mammas of many others of us a long time before we were born.

"Ah!" remarked this ancient dame, when one of our stories—I think it was a ghost story—had come to a conclusion—"it's all very easy to talk, but I suppose there are other persons who have seen strange things—ay, and can tell strange things about 'em, too."

"No doubt, ma'am," one of us answered; "there was the old woman who went up to the moon: she must have had some uncommonly strange things to tell."

"Likewise the old woman who lived in a shoe," another took occasion to remark.

"To say nothing of the old woman who fell asleep

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by the King's highway," a third observed, "and was so badly treated by Mr. Stout, the tinker."

"Ah, yes, I daresay!" the housekeeper rejoined, bridling up, adjusting her many-bowed cap, and evidently in that state of temporary irritation known to young ladies at a boarding-school as a "pet." "That's right! Tease and mock a poor lonely old body, do! It's very generous and manly, isn't it? It wasn't so when I lived with the quality."

"With whom, ma'am?" I made bold to inquire.

"With gentlefolks!" the housekeeper retorted, snappishly. "With the very first families! With none of your rubbishing country squires: nay, nor with knights nor barrow-knights neither; but with born lords and ladies. With the very first nobility in the land, though I say it, that shouldn't—"

"Indeed, ma'am!" I interposed in as respectful tone as I could command, wishing to conciliate the worthy, but somewhat irascible old lady.

"Yes, indeed," pursued the old housekeeper. "It isn't for nothing, pert and flippant as you are, that I lived seven years and three months in the service of my Lord Millamant."

"I knew his lordship well," I observed gravely; "that is, I have seen his portrait in the print-shops, and read of his achievements in the newspapers when I was a boy. He ran away with and married Miss Jaghire, the great Indian heiress, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"He killed Sir Hargreaves Grimwood, the West country baronet, in a duel about Lady Grimwood,

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didn't he? I remember his trial and acquittal as though they had occurred yesterday."

"Yes, sir, he did; but he was badly provoked. Sir Hargreaves was a sad man—lived at the Brimstone Coffee House, and always drank a pint of schiedam before breakfast. He wasn't the first tall gentleman who had been shot about Lady Grimwood."

"And he died ambassador at Madrid, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir; but that was long after I left his service. It is full forty years ago that I was housekeeper to the Right Honourable the Earl of Millamant, Lord Lieutenant of Darkshire, and Colonel of the Darkshire Yeomanry Cavalry, at Cortfoil House, Hay Hill, Berkeley Square."

"And was it there you became acquainted with any strange tale?"

The housekeeper nodded significantly.

"What may it have been about, now? Love?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the housekeeper; "I never could abide love, and wouldn't trouble my head about such nonsense. No, it wasn't the least in the world about love."

"Murder, now," I hinted.

"Worse!" said the housekeeper, emphatically.

"Worse!" I repeated. "What can be worse?" I might have suggested fire, thieves, suicide, elopement; but I thought murder would cover a multitude of crimes. "Now, what is it, my dear, good soul?"

"There," resumed the housekeeper, now thoroughly appeased, "I see you're all dying of curiosity to know

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about it, and I wont keep you any longer in suspense. Besides, the story's a very short one. It was hushed up at the time, and it would have been much more than my place was worth to breathe a word of it to a living soul. But the chief people concerned in it are all dead. The very dog was poisoned with two ounces of poisoned paunch by the butcher the day afterwards, as if, poor dumb creature, he could have wagged a tail to compromise anybody."

"But we haven't heard who the dog was, or the butcher either," I broke in, I am afraid, somewhat impatiently. "Pray, begin at the beginning, my dear madam, we're all impatience to hear."

"Well, then," commenced the housekeeper, settling herself comfortably in her arm-chair. "You shall hear all about it. Just draw your chairs closer round me, for I'm not very long of breath."

We did as the old lady desired, and she went on thus:—

"In the year eighteen hundred and nineteen, I was, as I have told you, housekeeper to my Lord Millamant. The story I am telling you has to do with the winter of that same year. A bitter winter it was. Frosts three weeks long, and a deluge of mud whenever there was a thaw. Coals, bread, and meat frightfully dear. The poor crying out fit to make your heart break, and the taxes as heavy as hard dumplings. *Our* taxes were paid for us, thank goodness, even to that on the hair powder with which the footmen plastered their heads. We were all well fed and well cared for, for my Lord Milla-

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mant was far too proud and rich a nobleman to put us on board wages when he went out of town, and always said that he liked to see his servants plump and rosy. It didn't matter to him how much the butcher's and baker's bills came to. He had immense estates in Darkshire, and two or three comfortable things they used to call sinecures in those days; besides, wasn't there his wife, the late Miss Jaghire's rich Indian fortune?

"My Lord Millamant had been away from London during the hunting season. He had a pack of hounds at Cartfoil Hall (the family name was Cartfoil), Darkshire, and had been entertaining all the gentry of the country side, with many of the nobility from London, in the true style of old English hospitality. All the grand furniture in the mansion on Hay Hill had been covered up since September, when his lordship and her ladyship went out of town. The carpets in the grand saloons were rolled up, the chandeliers wrapped in yellow gauze; the pictures the same—dreadful grim old pictures there were, of noblemen in curly wigs, and ladies in hoop petticoats and shockingly low dresses—and the rich silver and parcel gilt plate of which my Lord Millamant, being so great a nobleman, had a vast quantity, was safe and sound in four oak chests clamped with iron at Messrs. Doublon and Moydor's, the bankers in Fleet-street: it was a good plan to send one's silver to the bankers, for there were plenty of housebreakers about in those days, and no police except the wheezy old constables, and the Bow-street red waistcoats.

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"It was on the 21st of December, 1819, that your humble servant received a post letter, franked by Mr. Tubwell, one of the county members for Darkshire, for my Lord Millamant was always too generous with his franks, and never had any to spare for himself. The letter was from his lordship, and, in his usual kind style, though to my very great surprise, told me that he and the Countess were coming up to spend Christmas in London. All the time I had been in their service, then four years come that Christmas-day, they had kept it at Cartfoil Hall. However, there was no mistaking my lord's directions. He always gave them himself, for her ladyship, saving her memory, was one of the laziest creatures living, and never did anything much beyond lying on a sofa, and talking to her grey and her green parrot. I was to have the carpets laid down, the furniture thoroughly dusted, all the beds well aired; for my lord was to bring company with him from Darkshire; and I was to get the plate from the bankers and have it all well-cleaned for a grand banquet my lord intended to give on Christmas-day. Enclosed in the letter was a slip of paper, containing an order to the bankers to deliver the plate to me, or to Mr. Beeswing, the butler, and which, as far as I can recollect, ran thus:—

"*Cartfoil Hall, December 19th,* 1819.

"Messrs. Doublon and Moydor,

"Please deliver the four boxes marked A, B, C, D, containing the plate left in your care, to Mrs. —, or Samuel Beeswing, my servants, bearers of this.

(Signed) "MILLAMANT."

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"There was his lordship's signature, certainly; but somehow the name seemed written in a larger and more tremulous hand than usual. The i's weren't dotted, nor the t's crossed in his lordship's general style, but still the remainder of the letter was like enough to him, and the cover bore the Cartfoil postmark. I showed it to Mr. Beeswing, who laughed at my doubts, could swear the handwriting was my lord's throughout, and said it was very likely that there had been merry doings at Cartfoil Hall during the week, that my lord had taken t'other bottle overnight, and that his hand was rather shaky the next morning.

"'And you may be sure," added Beeswing 'that 'his lordship punished the small beer, if he did have t'other bottle.' The quality drank small beer then, the morning after. Soda-water was invented, but was thought bad for the stomach, and wasn't at all the fashion.

"However, notwithstanding Beeswing's confidence in the letter, I wasn't quite satisfied. 'I daresay it's very nervous and silly of me, Beeswing,' I said, 'but it behoves us all to be careful. I shall take this letter to Wild Mr. Will. *He* knows my lord's hand well enough, and I shall see what he says to it.'

"Now Wild Mr. Will, as we servants, many of whom had known him since he was a baby in long-clothes, called him, was to the world in general no other than the Honourable William Cartfoil, my lord's younger brother. He was a dreadfully wild young man, Mr. Will. He was fond of wine, and

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women, and of dice, and all sort of wickednesses. He had been a captain in the Horse Guards, but had sold out. He had fought scores of duels, and killed two or three people; rest their souls, and be merciful to his; but he was one of the merriest, best-tempered fellows you ever knew or saw. My lord was very fond of him, and had paid his debts and set him up again, times out of number; but you could do nothing with Wild Mr. Will. He was always getting into scrapes; and when his lordship had got him out again, getting into new ones. People said he lived mostly now by playing at cards and dice, and that his carryings-on with the actresses at the play-house—the wicked, painted hussies!—were dreadful. I know he had borrowed money of Beeswing more than once, and had at least two-thirds of his sister-in-law's pin-money every quarter; but still no one could help liking him, and he was almost adored by the servants.

"I took the letter to Wild Mr. Will at his lodgings in Great Ryder-street, St. James's. He was drinking hock with a captain of dragoons and a low wretch of a fellow that got his living by prize-fighting; but he came out on the landing to speak to me. I showed him the letter, and hinted at my doubts.

"'Stuff and nonsense,' he cried, when he had read the letter twice through and held it to the light. It's Jack Cartfoil's fist for five hundred guineas.' (My lord's name was John.) 'Newmarket to the knocker of Newgate that it's my brother's hand. Nobody makes blots like these except the Earl of

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Millamant. Besides, don't you see that he spells 'swept' 'swep,' without the 't'? Jack never could spell. Trot you away to the banker's, my worthy soul, and get the plate, and polish it all up nice and bright, for you know how particular my Lord Millamant is, and what a pother there will be if the coronet doesn't come well out on the spoons and forks. There, get along with you, and there's a guinea to drink my health. Stop—mind, for safety, you lock the plate up in my Lady's boudoir.'

"Of course, after the Honourable William Cartfoil had given his opinion, hesitation was no longer to be thought of. Beeswing and I took a hackney-coach to Fleet-street, and the head cashier, when he ordered one of the porters to carry the four plate chests to the carriage, said, 'My Lord's handwriting was as plain as a pike-staff, and he should like to cash a cheque for ten thousand with such a 'Millamant' signed to it.' *He* gave me—such a nice gentleman as he was, too—a guinea to drink the health of the firm! Ah, how liberal people were forty years ago!

"We looked over the plate that evening, counted everything; found all in accordance with the lists, and, with the assistance of the three housemaids, I had everything cleaned and polished up by supper-time. But still I felt uneasy. I could not repress a dreadful feeling of terror at something; I knew not what. The plate was all locked up again, and deposited, according to Mr. Will's instructions, in my Lady's boudoir, which was at the end of a grand *suite* of apartments on the first floor. There was

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no door to this room, only heavy hangings to the doorway; but every window in the house was bolted and barred up.

"Still I felt uneasy, and, towards ten o'clock, I slipped up, and going to our butcher, Mr. Chubby-chop, in Mount-street, Grosvenor-square, I borrowed his well-known and fierce bull-dog, Towler, from him, to keep guard in the house all night. One of the butcher's boys brought the dog muzzled to our house, for he was dreadfully savage, and just before we went to bed, Beeswing unmuzzled him and let him loose in the hall.

"I had dreadful dreams that night. I dreamed of a procession of men carrying coffins, one after the other, in a long procession that never ended. The morning came at last; the youngest housemaid awoke me, and I came down to breakfast in the still-room, when in came Mr. Beeswing, trembling all over, and with a face as white as chalk.

"'For the Lord Almighty's sake come this way,' he cried.

"He led, or rather dragged me to the boudoir on the first-floor, and there I saw a sight I shall never to my dying day forget. The rich carpet was dabbled in blood, and on it there lay his length along the body of a man, stark, stiff, and dead. *His throat had been literally torn out* by the dog, which crouched by his side, uttering a low growl now and then, and licking his lips.

"In one of the dead man's hands was a bunch of skeleton keys. One of the plate-chests had been opened, and a portion of the contents was on the

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floor. The men-servants bent over the body to raise it, when there was a cry of horror and astonishment.

"God forgive him, and us all! *we recognised the body of the Honourable William Cartfoil!*

* * * *

"It was discovered afterwards that the letter from the country was a forgery, executed, probably, by the unfortunate and guilty man, who had died in this miserable manner. It was found that he had made his entry by a back door leading into the mews, of which he must have had a key, and creeping up a back staircase, had entered the boudoir by a side door he knew well, and had been heard by the dog, and so perished.

"The story was hushed up, and it was reported and believed that young Mr. Will had gone abroad and died there.

"The Millamant title is extinct."

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THE SECRET

OF

MULEY MOGREBBIN BEG.

An Oriental Apologue in a full-bottomed Wig.

Not unadvisedly do I call this little story an "Apologue in a full-bottomed wig;" but I redoubt obscurity, and will endeavour to explain the meaning of my sub-title before I relate to you the story of Muley Mogrebbin Beg and his Secret. I have been toiling and moiling lately, for a purpose, among dusty old bookstall treasures, and assiduously collecting as many tattered, dog's-eared, once calf-bound volumes as I could find of the British Essayists of the eighteenth century. I confess that the reverence I entertain for Joseph Addison led me to invest more capital in the purchase of an edition of the "Spectator" than I was perhaps warranted in doing. It was an edition without notes, mind. What do you want with notes? It is as though an importunate by-sitter were to expatiate to you on the quality of the Clos Vougeot

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or Château Lafitte you were drinking. You bought the wine—whether paid for, it is quite another matter—and you alone have the right to make remarks upon it. If you stand in need of notes, read books, and make the notes yourself. But to resume the thread of my bookstall experiences. I drew my purse-strings at the "Spectator," and only sought the pocket where the coppers nestled. I bought Idlers and Ramblers, Adventurers and Tatlers, Worlds and Connoisseurs; but I should be ashamed to tell you how little I gave for them. I travelled a little out of the record of the British Essayists, and added the "Turkish Spy" and the "Lettres Persanes" to my stock; and I finished with the acquisition of "Rasselas," the "Citizen of the World," and the "Tales of the Genii." I shall not want to buy any more books for a very long while. Now, among all these cubic feet of ragged literature, among the eighteenth century lore of which (for my purpose) I have been in quest, I have come upon a vast variety of oriental apologues. Stay: a number would be the more appropriate word. There is little variety in the naïve, sham Eastern tales and essays written by the worthy gentlemen in the full-bottomed wigs, who flourished when George the Second was King. What a wonderful "wiggy" notion of oriental life they have, to be sure! It is all Selim and Fatima, Azimatho and Perilla—Phillis and Corydon and Sacharissa, transported to the Levant. You hear of Constantinople and "Bassora," Bagdad and Grand Cairo, Damascus and Ispahan, Arabia and

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Crim Tartary; but all the rest is to these gentlemen in the wigs a *terra incognita*. Poor gentlemen! How many of them discoursed of the loves of Selim and Fatima in a cock-loft in Little Britain, their stern landlady having taken away the ladder till the manuscript was completed and the rent paid? How many of these worthy hack-writers, their wigs hanging over the neighbouring chair, scribbled about Bassora and Grand Cairo for two guineas a sheet in their Fleet, or Mint, or Grub-street lodgings—the printer's boy dozing in the corner? Somehow or other, orientalism of the full-bottomed wig order seems to have taken possession of me. It is *so* pleasant to escape the necessity of being topographically, ethnologically, and archæologically accurate. What does it matter if the governor of a province be a Pacha or a Bashaw; the sovereign of Turkey the Sultan, or the Grand Signor; the domestic establishment of an oriental, his seraglio, his harem, or his hhareem? Musselman or Muslim, Constantinople or Stamboul, "yenitchar" or janissary, it is all one; so long as you write in a full-bottomed wig. Never mind *couleur locale*, or any proprieties of place, or time, or costume. First catch your apologue, and then dress it *à l'Orientale*, according to the inspiration of your wig. You can't be wrong if you follow Dr. Johnson, Dr. Goldsmith, and the President Montesquiou. Give me a full-bottomed wig, then let the landlady, if she choose, take away the ladder, and let me write about an East that never was, and never could be, not even in a burlesque by Brough or Byron. Let me dis-

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course of a people as fabulous as the anthropophagi "whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," and of a country as mythical as that curtly described by lying old Sir John Mandeville in his travels, and in these few words—"It is alle fulle of divells." My wig there, ho! and a fresh quill pen.

Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, was Sultan of the vast country of Gengistan. He was the thirty-seventh monarch of the ninth dynasty. His palace at the capital city, Missera, was eleven hundred cubits in height, nineteen thousand and seventeen in length, toward the river Gurgla, and a hundred yards thick every way. The columns and bolectments were of pure gold, the cornices of frosted silver, the roof of ebony inlaid with precious gems, and the pavement of jasper and chalcedony chequered with mother-of-pearl. His innumerable guards were of immense size, blackness, and fierceness, and carried drawn scimitars of the finest Damascus steel night and day. Hanging gardens, beautified by fountains and rows of clipped laburnum hedges, on which perched peacocks, eagles, sparrow-hawks, nightingales, and other birds of prey, surrounded the palace; and in the rear was a vast park, where the Sultan often enjoyed the pleasures of the chase, and in which tigers, antelopes, gazelles, unicorns and rhododendra disported themselves in the mossy glades and on the grassy knolls. Thus all was suited to profound reverie and soft though melancholy contemplation; and the artifices of courts, the virulence of faction, the depravity of a corrupt age, the insolence of the great, and the ingratitude of

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princes, were all forgotten and forgiven in these sylvan solitudes and impenetrable recesses.*

Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, perhaps the most magnificent sovereign between Samarcand and Cashmere, was brave yet merciful, generous yet prudent, lenient yet unswerving in the administration of justice. He bestowed praise with the same alacrity that he displayed in reproving adulation addressed towards himself. He had mingled some of the gravity of age with the hilarity of youth, and when he became old he discovered that he had not spent all the treasures of his youthful gaiety. He was not one of those ostentatious princes who cause their apocryphal achievements to be graven by obsequious scribes on tablets of gold; but daily his lips poured forth the words of wisdom, and when he sat in his divan as judge, few departed from his presence without the most striking and substantial proofs of his strict sense of justice—proofs written in characters difficult to be effaced, either on the smalls of their backs or on the soles of their feet. So devoted was he to the cultivation of the *Sylva sylvarum* that he is to this day remembered under the affectionate title of the "Father of the Bamboo." I have said that he was merciful. When, after a long and sanguinary war, he overcame Slydaspes, Emperor of the Lcay Islands, and brought that once potent monarch a captive to Missera, he refrained from following the immemorial custom of

* I dedicated a book (with my wig on) to Sir Robert Walpole, and he never sent me so much as a guinea. Britain is in evil case.—*Delenda est Carthago!*

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Gengisfan, which consigned all prisoners of war to a death of the most horrible kind—to be placed, indeed, on a range of iron bars on which were piled quantities of the mushrooms of the country, and being previously split open, to be so broiled alive. No; Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, showed himself snperior to such ferocious traditions. He caused his prisoner to be invested with handcuffs and fetters of rose-diamonds, the apexes inwards. Convinced of the cruelty of solitary confinement, he took care that the dungeon in which Slydaspes was confined should be enlivened by numerous cohorts of cheerful rats, and plentifully supplied with water from the adjacent moat. Hearing that the prisoner was afflicted with face-ache, he commanded his own body-surgeon to draw every one of the fallen sovereign's double teeth, charging nothing for the operation; and with a delicate solicitude for the more elegant comforts of the toilet, the best Rowland's Macassar Oil was supplied daily to Slydaspes. It was used externally and in a boiling state. Finally, after an amicable colloquy with his prisoner, in the course of which he facetiously twisted out his tongue in order to teach him the true pronunciation of the Gengistanee language, and furthermore, with the purest depilatory intentions, after plucking out, with his own royal hands, several handfuls of his superfluous hairs, Shishak put the climax to his clemency by setting the conquered Slydaspes at liberty. To be sure, his hands were amputated at the wrist; walnutshells, with blackbeetles in them, were bound over his eyes; and the jackboots with

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which he was generously provided for travelling purposes were filled with leeches and scorpions; but at least he could enjoy the inestimable gift of freedom. It is painful to reflect on the ingratitude of mankind, even of men who have occupied thrones; but it must be recorded that the wretched Slydaspes most unthankfully and perversely died half an hour after his liberation. He was buried with the pomp befitting his rank, in a field not a hundred miles from the great mosque of Missera, —open sepulchre being deemed the most honourable obsequies that could be accorded to a Gengoo; and his remains were watched night after night by humble but faithful dependents on the most aristocratic families in Missera. He died in a ditch, and he is not the only king in history who has gone to the dogs.

Powerful, magnificent, feared and loved as he was, Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, was still a prince of the simplest tastes. Although at his sumptuous table there were every day served stewed nightingales' tongues, peacocks' eyes, ortolans' wings devilled, pearls dissolved in eau de Cologne, gazelles' hearts with diamond dust in sharp sauce, and other delicacies of the season, he would frequently retire to a remote part of his palace and order his cook to prepare for his repast a simple slice of the flesh of the domestic ox prepared over a clear fire in a shallow, round, black utensil with a long handle, and served with a delicious vegetable called "el onion." Every Friday night, too, he partook of a whity-brown, leathery-looking viand, stewed in milk and

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smothered in the aforesaid delicious vegetable, and known as "tripe"—from the Greek τριπος; and in winter time he frequently indulged in the consumption of those small and oleaginous, but exquisitely flavoured, salt-water fish called in the Gengistanee tongue "sprats." Thus, too, although the cellars of his palace were stored with the rarest wines and liqueurs, such as Falernian, Chian, Maustic, Anthyllan, Teniotic, Sebennytic, Coptite, the delicious vintages of far-distant South Africa, the wonderful distilled waters of the British barbarians called "Venerable Thomas," and Brett's BB, together with maraschino, vodki, raki, arrack, and orange-boven; and, although on State occasions, the royal butler brought forth a monster skin made of panthers' hides, formerly in the possession of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and which was twenty-five cubits long, fourteen broad, required six hundred men to draw it, and contained three thousand gallons of wine, the favourite beverage of Shishak was a simple infusion of malt combined with hops, and gently fermented. This he drank from a tankard of the purest pewter, the bottom of which was inscribed with verses by the famous poet Grimes, or else from a long beaker of Tyrian glass. And, finally, that the simplicity of his mode of living may be well understood, let it be mentioned, that whereas the grandees of his court were in the habit of inhaling the fumes of the most expensive Shiraz tobacco through spiral tubes bound with golden wire, and whose mouthpieces were enriched with amber and precious stones, the modest Shishak was content to puff at a slightly-

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curved tube of white pipe-clay, the stem enriched with a thin veneer of sealing-wax, and the bowl filled with a wholesome but inexpensive species of tobacco, to which Milo, the mystical poet of Gengistan, had given the charmingly imaginative appellation of the "eye of the bird." And, with his infusion of malt and hops (in Gengistanee Allsopps-bitterburee) in its homely tankard, and with the gentle clouds of the "eye of the bird" rolling above his royal head, Shishak would sometimes deign to remember that he was not only the son of Psalmhanassan, but the grandson of the famous Caliph Cole; whereupon he would call for three favourite musicians, who, with instruments made of the hair of horses, played on strings formed of the twisted entrails of the cat, stretched across hollow cases of thin wood; and these musicians, whose names were Sainton Effendi (meaning a saint) Stradivarius, Beg, and Sivorioglou, were lineal descendants of the three fiddlers who had played before Caliph Cole; and they played before Shishak to his great solace and delight.

Like his illustrious predecessor, the good Caliph Haroun Alraschid Tamerlane—Genghis Khan, Aurungzebe, Scanderbeg, Saladin, Mazeppa, and Tippoo Saib were also among his ancestors—the Sultan Shishak was very fond of visiting, in strict disguise, and after nightfall, the humbler quarters of his capital. Unlike Haroun, however, he was accompanied by no giaffar in the shape of a grand vizier; for, to tell the truth, the Prime Minister, Pamerlane Bashaw, had quite enough to do all day

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in transacting business in the street called El Downing, and at night his gracious sovereign vouchsafed to employ him in manufacturing a curious kind of sweetmeat called "conundrums," for the use of the ladies of the royal harem, and occasionally in copying out the advertisements in the "Missera Times," the daily record of events that had occurred throughout the vast empire of Gengistan. Nor were Shishak's travels *incognito* confined to the back streets of Missera. He frequently ventured, alone and unattended, ten or twenty leagues into the country, deriving much pleasure from the conversation of the peasantry and the homely refreshment provided by wayside inns, and having no weapons beyond a collapsible canopy of green silk attached to a small stick with a curved handle, denominated a "Sangster" and a hollow weapon of rotund shape, with a screw top, and filled with a potent liquid—the whole called a "pocket-pistol."

Attired in a plain caftan of rough wool, with a turban of the kind termed "pillicock" or "wide-awake," and with his royal features concealed by a false nose manufactured from paste-board, and artfully coloured by a celebrated professor in the Jews' quarter of Missera, Nathan-ben Simmons, the monarch of Gengistan was one day wandering in the beautiful pastoral valley of Shortribs. The mountains of Cutch look down upon this vale, the Gurgla flows through it, and myriads of sheep, with fleeces long and soft as tresses of the maidens of Mingrelia, feed on its richly-pastured slopes. The Sultan Shishak paced pensively through this valley

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of peace and innocent delight, now watching the smoke which rose from distant cottages on the mountain side, and now that which curled from his own pipe, which, for convenience sake, he had broken short off, so that the bowl was within an inch of his real nose, and nearly touched his false one. The bulbul was singing to the rose in the adjoining topes of magnolias; the bungalows were all in full bloom; linnets, thrushes, bull canaries, and other songsters of the grove, enlivened the variegated jungle with their delightful melody; chattering cariblancos, or white-faced monkeys, sprang from branch to branch; the oozly bird uttered his shrill note; the podasokus whistled through the nape of his richly-plumed neck; the rypophagon scudded timorously over the velvet turf; the dulcet tones of the talking fish, calling to its long-lost parent, were heard beneath the tranquil waters of the Gurgla, on whose sedgy bank a triton was frying a minnow for his lunch. A mermaid was doing a little bit of clear-starching to a collar made of white coral *guipure;* Naiads, Dryads, Hamadryads, and Bacchanalians were disporting themselves on the verdant meads; and ever and anon a stately Bonassus stalked from the thick covert, and, as he browsed on the tender esculents—sliced turnips, mangel-wurzel, oilcake, and and Thorley's food—abounding in this delightful valley, cast a long blue shadow on the grass.

"By Bolivorax, one of my ancestors," murmured Shishak, half aloud, "this is peace, indeed!"

"Tootle tootle too" was the sound gently heard at a short distance.

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"What's that?" exclaimed the Sultan, in a somewhat louder key.

"Tootle tootle too" went the sound again.

Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, looked about him for some time, without being able to discern anything that could account for the sound he had heard; for the Bonassus, when excited, does not "tootle too," but roars like a bull of Bashan. Neither are the rypophagon and the podasokus given to tootle tooing; and the oozly bird, as is well known, when excited, utters a cry like unto the stewing of eels.

At length did Shishak become aware of the presence of a shepherd who was sitting upon a bank and piping. It is a curious phase in the characteristics of a people so pastoral as the Gengoos, that, although they adored mutton, they despised and almost abhorred shepherds, neat-herds, and swine-herds. These agricolæ were generally represented on their mural paintings clad in coarse and ragged garments; the milking of cows was considered an infamous avocation; and he who drove fat oxen was forbidden to grow fat himself under a penalty of a hundred tomauns. The fact of the Gengoos having been sorely tyrannized over for about a century and a half by a race of pastor or shepherd kings, whose unscrupulous mode of collecting taxes and tribute gave rise to the locution, "by hook or by crook," may, perhaps, account for this dislike. So the Gengoos hated those who tended sheep and cattle; and disparaging stories of the treachery of Paris and the cruelty of Admetus were never out of their mouths.

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It must be admitted, however, that the shepherd whom Shishak saw, at once, by his engaging appearance, disarmed unfavourable criticism. He seemed barely eighteen years of age. His eyes were as blue as the great ribbon of honour worn across the shoulder by the great nobles of Gengistan; his lips were as red as the embroidered tunics of the Royal bodyguard; and his teeth were as white as those warriors' belts—belts with which they frequently indulged in frolicsome sports and pastimes after the manner of the Lupercalian games, to the delight of the civilian population of Missera. Kindly Nature had grafted two peaches on the lilies of his cheeks, and his ears were crisp and delicate as escalloped oysters. His form was of exquisite mould, and the calves of his legs were of such size and symmetry that Shishak at once thought of what a splendid addition to his corps of Plush Guards or chosen servitors of the palace this shepherd would make. His costume was as coarse and mean as that usually worn by persons of his degree. His legs were bare, and he was roughly shod with sandals of untanned bull's hide. The skin of a brindled cow—the hairy part worn outside, and very mangy to look at—was his sole garment; under-robe, of linen, calico, canvas, or buckram even, he had none; and on his silky locks there sate a dingy old Phrygian cap, dreadfully the worse for wear. His shepherd's crook lay on the bank beside him; a wallet of rusty leather hung at his waist; and his eyes beamed, and his yellow hair floated like the gossamer in the breeze, and he piped

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as though he never would grow old; and ever and anon he sang.

"Good morrow to you, and many of them," said Shishak, kindly.

"I am the son of Theocritus, and the nephew of Bloomfield," sang the shepherd. "Listen to the rills, the cascades, and the purling brooks. Who is happy? Is the Sultan happy?—No."

"That's true enough," murmured Shishak, with a half sigh; for you see that, although he was so great, and powerful, and wealthy a monarch, things sometimes went rather uncomfortably in the royal palace of Missera; indeed, the Sultana—but as the O Hodah hath it, more anon.

"Is the Grand Vizier happy?" went on the shepherd, in a charming tenor voice, and, of course, quite unconscious of the presence of any audience beyond the sheep which browsed around, five thousand feeding like one. "No, he is not happy. Black care sits behind the horseman, and behind the Grand Vizier on his elephant of state. He has taken that which was not his; and when he is caught he will be cast into prison. He has made ducks and drakes of the royal revenue. Ninety-nine orphans of ninety-nine widows he has wronged in one day, to elevate ninety-nine of his second wife's cousins to places of trust and honour. His budget is bosh—a wind-bag, a delusion, a bubble of the softest soap. He cooks his accounts unto the similitude of an over-done mutton-chop."

"The deuce he does!" quoth Shishak to himself.

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"By Sarabroth, Faribroth, and Gogmagog, my ancestors, I'll have some private conversation with the soles of the feet of Pamerlane Bashaw before noon to-morrow."

"Who is happy?" continued the untired songster. "Is a man with a mother-in-law happy? No. With the toothache? No. With soft corns? No. With debts and duns? No. Who is happy? I am happy. I am fair; I am young. I am not troubled with a washerwoman. I never had an umbrella. I can eat three quarters of a pound of mutton at every meal. Phyllis smiles upon me. Her mother bids her bind her hair with bands of rosy hue, tie up her sleeves with ribbons rare, and lace her bodice blue; but she has no heart to do aught when I am away. Her father catches rats, and she sells rats, and she loves me. Eleueleu! She will come out to-night, and dance by the light of the moon. My hair curls, and I shall be admitted beneath the roof of her respected papa as soon as I am heard knocking at the door. Tootle too! Early in the morning, even at the break of day, she will accompany me to Charleston. Oh! *felicitas, felicitatis!* I am happy, I am happy. Tootle too, wooly woo, woo!" He ceased, and a nightingale in the adjoining grove, stung with envy, selected the sharpest twig he could find from the twig on which he was sitting, and cut his delicate throttle from ear to ear. The Bonassus's opinion of the performance was known the following Saturday in the *Musical World*, at least it would have been known if the "boosy" Editor had reached the office from the palace of the Albion in time.

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"Hi!" cried the Sultan Shishak, "what's o'clock?"

"A round thing like a Dutchman's face," answered the shepherd readily.

"What is your name?" pursued Shishak, somewhat peremptorily, for he was not accustomed to be joked with.

"My name is Norval," the shepherd made answer. "On the Grampian Hills—these are the Grampian Hills—a frugal swain his only care——"

"Yes, yes; we know all about that," interrupted Shishak; "but how came you to be so happy, to be as eloquent as Ælocampadius, and as musical as Farinelli?"

"I am young," replied the shepherd. "Youth is the season of eloquence, and music, and happiness, and love. And if you wish to know it, I have another name in addition to Norval; it is Muley Mogrebbin Beg."

"And how came you to know about the Grand Vizier's dishonesty?"

"A little bird told me," the shepherd returned, with a sly look towards his questioner. "The little bird tells me a variety of things. For instance, how the Sultana——"

"*Will you hold your tongue,*" roared Shishak. "Nay, answer me another question. Can you prove Pamerlane Bashaw to be a thief?"

"I can."

"Will you prove it before the Sultan?"

"Tootle-too"—the shepherd began to pipe.

"Will you prove it? I say."

"*How much will you give?*" returned the shep-

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herd, looking his interlocutor full in the face with his large blue eyes.

"Give!" cried Shishak, "I'd give you a diamond flute instead of that oaten pipe. I'll give you a mantle of gold tissue instead of that mangy cowskin, and a turban covered with koh-i-noors instead of that greasy nightcap. I'll give Pamerlane Bashaw his dismissal, and something else for luck, and I'll make you Grand Vizier."

"Are you the Sultan, then?" the shepherd remarked coolly, as he laid down his flute. "You don't look much like one. I took you for a commercial party. However, if you'll just allow me to spoil that hedgehog which is baking yonder for my dinner, so that nobody else will be able to eat it, I don't mind coming with you on the terms you propose. But mind, I must have four meals a-day, and everything found me." So saying, the sportive youth approached a small clay kiln in which the spiky but succulent animal of which he had spoken was cooking, and having trampled a quantity of poisonous herbs into the impromptu oven, he put his flute into the pocket of his cowskin mantle, murmured an invocation to Allah, and announced his readiness to follow Shishak.

There was an awful scene at the privy council that afternoon. Pamerlane Bashaw *was asked for his accounts*, and, after turning a livid green, and having two strong epileptic fits, he produced a small penny memorandum book, by which, notwithstanding the numerous falsifications and erasures, it became at once apparent that he had stolen and

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embezzled twelve thousand scores of rupees, a four-penny piece, and a Queen Anne's farthing. Entries were also found alluding to divers "hens and chickens," which he had purloined, melted down, and paid the produce of into his banker's; and these, on inquiry, were found to be an imaginative name for the tankards inscribed by stanzas with the poet Guines, out of which Shishak used to drink his infusion of malt and hops, and several of which had been lately missed from the area railings of the palace of Missera. The Vizier was found guilty of theft, peculation, malversation, concussion, fraudulent trusteeship, thimblerigging, setting the Gurgla on fire, and other crimes, and he was covered with shame as with a garment. The first impulse of his offending sovereign, in his tremendous ire, was to order the dishonest minister to be sewn up with seven mad tom-cats in his own budget, and cast into the river; but, on second thoughts, and as usually happens with this truly clement potentate, justice was tempered with mercy. That night Pamerlane Bashaw went to bed with his head on, but without any toe nails—they had been bambooed off—and with his hair, and the scalp appertaining thereto, neatly removed by means of a patent scarifier. He slept well, and the next morning, after being put into a hydraulic press, and neatly mangled, he was arrested under an attachment of the Court of Chancery for contempt—he had always been a most supercilious statesman—and died very miserably, about half a century afterwards, on, or rather in, a Bench belonging to the Sultan. The quality of

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mercy is not strained. And Muley Mogrebbin Beg reigned as Grand Vizier in Pamerlane's stead. Behold him now, who wore the mangy cowskin and the dingy nightcap, arrayed in cloths of gold and silver, covered with jewels, stars, and ribbons, and riding on a cream-coloured elephant, with his tail tied up with pea-green ribbon. When his accounts were audited—a ceremony which took place every year, and you may be sure that the Pamerlane Bashaw family, which still possessed some influence, looked pretty sharply after him—he was found to be as honest as the day. Before his time, financial deficits had sometimes been known in Gengistan; but under the administration of Muley Mogrebbin Beg there was nothing but a succession of surpluses. He caused the bank authorities to lower their rates of discount, so that you could get money "in the street"—I should like to know, without my wig, where that "street" is—at a penny-farthing per cent. He built baths and laundries and model lodging-houses. He cleansed the Gurgla which of late years had become somewhat unseemly to the sight, and unsavoury to the smell of the Gengoos. He was universally admired and revered for his wisdom and charity; for he dispensed the major part of his vast revenues in pious uses, and no one envied him the power he wielded or the patronage he possessed, for he had no nephews and no cousins. But it must be made a note of that the Grand Vizier, Muley Mogrebbin Beg, was no more heard to sing, and that in lieu of the peaches with which nature had graced his cheek in youth,

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he wore instead a pair of very yellow quinces. Nor is it to be wondered at either that his brow became very wrinkled and furrowed, and that from his once smooth chin there sprouted at last a white and venerable beard. Before his advent to power changes of ministry had taken place in Gengistan about once in every three years; but it is a fact that Muley Mogrebbin Beg retained the reins of office for exactly fifty years, when his gracious master, full of years and honours, deigned to depart this life. He died in the arms of his faithful minister, and with his dying breath recommended him to the favour of his son and successor, Ali Cubjak.

So Shishak the son of Psalmhanassan was wiped out, as with a sponge, and all Gengistan grovelled in the dust before his son, the Sultan Ali Cubjak. I am sorry to say that this young man—he was not forty when he ascended the throne—had scarcely reigned for six months ere he began grievously to disappoint public expectation. He was proud, cruel, gluttonous, and revengeful. He was addicted to games of chance, and to unlimited potations of distilled liquors, and he was unboundedly extravagant. In youth, a preceptor unfaithful to his charge had taught him the art of spending ten tomauns out of sixpence a day, and he began to make good use of this destructive knowledge so soon as Gengistan and its revenues were his. But the treasures of Ophir, of Golconda, of Potosi, of the Burra-Burra, the Yarra-Yarra, and the Bendigo-diggings, would have been mere drops in the ocean of this reckless young man's improvidence. He was perpetually drawing

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on his Grand Vizier; he gave bills, paying nine hundred per cent. discount, to the Jews—bills which Muley Mogrebbin Beg had to take up on maturity. He anticipated the taxes; he exacted forced loans from his merchants and rich citizens; he pawned the crown jewels, and raffled his life policies; he entertained hordes of needy parasites who bled him like horse-leeches. He commenced dozens of new palaces, always stopped for want of funds. He didn't pay his tradesmen, and he was always going to see parties in the city, who were never there. The country was in confusion, and Muley Mogrebbin Beg was in despair.

But there was some one else who was not in despair, but rather overjoyed at the untoward aspect of things in Gengistan. This "some one" was Boudjak Effendim, the son of Pamerlane Bashaw, who had recently expired at the Sultan's Bench of a chronic attachment of the Court of Chancery. Boudjak, of course, hated Mogrebbin Beg, and ascribed to his influence all the misfortunes of his deceased and dishonest papa. Being a man of great natural shrewdness, cultivated to an exquisite degree of hypocrisy by long commerce with the Dervishes of the sect called Ignatius Ben Loyola, he had managed to worm himself into a position of some influence at Court, the which, you may be sure, he never failed to make use of to disparage the Grand Vizier. This Boudjak Effendim intrigued and lied till he made himself useful to the dissolute and reckless Cubjak Ali. In public none so demure, so smooth-faced, so apparently pious as he, with his

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high dervish's cap and saintly robe, lined with sheepskin. He was always telling his beads, butting his head against his prayer carpet, bowing in the direction of the sacred Kaaba of Mecca, and muttering prayers to Allah and the prophet; but in private who so accommodatingly jolly as Boudjak Effendim? He could sing a good song, and drink seven pigskins full of the liquor forbidden by the Koran, and organize the most charmingly wicked ballets of bayaderes and nautch-girls; but in the midst of the wildest orgies of which he and the depraved Cubjak partook, he never missed an opportunity of reviling and calumniating his hated rival Muley Mogrebbin Beg.

One day when the Sultan had a headache and no money—a state of things which happened to him now almost every day, and had endeavoured in vain to combat the one by copious draughts of soda-water, and the other by flying a toy called a "kite" in the Hebrew quarter of Missera—he was sitting very disconsolate on his divan, pouring out his complaints to his ever ready listener, Boudjak Effendim, who, in his high dervish's cap and sheepskin robe, stood before him in an attitude of the deepest humility—humility that was only in that attitude, and in those downcast eyes of his; in his wicked heart were pride, and lust, and hatred, and revenge.

"The old screw," grumbled the Sultan, "says that he can't afford so much as a pony (twenty-five tomauns) till the October dividends come in."

"Sinful and shameful," murmured Boudjak

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Effendim, "that so great, and wise, and generous, and humane a prince should be denied so miserable a sum as twenty-five tomauns, and that by one of his own slaves. Oh! Cubjak Ali, thy servant is poor. Silver or gold he has none, but that which he has is at the service of his adored master. Take this trifling obligation; they may lend something on it if you offer it as "undeniable security;" and he tendered a small square piece of somewhat dirty pasteboard, along whose upper line ran a curious arabesque pattern, and which was inscribed with these cabalistic characters in Arabic: "John Balls: One pair of papouches: Eightpence: Boudjak Effendim, Little Mosque Street."

"Pshaw!" replied the Sultan, putting aside the proffered loan, "I knew you were always a good-natured fellow. But I am really desperately pushed for tomauns. 'Tis true I had two hundred and fifty thousand the day before yesterday, but what's that to a man with the feelings and habits of a gentleman? I dare say old Muley is rather pinched, for I've milked him rather liberally lately."

"Pinched," echoed Boudjak Effendim, with a demoniacal sneer, "Pinched! Behold how easy it is for rogues and cozeners to laugh at my lord's beard, and make him even as the foolish sandpiper, which digs a hole in the sand and hides its head, forgetting that the hunters are taking aim at its tail."

"What do you mean, varlet?" the Sultan exclaimed, turning very pale.

"Does your highness think that Muley Mogrebbin Beg is short of money?"

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"He says so."

"O King, live for ever. But if Muley Mogrebbin Beg be really pinched, *ask him what he keeps in that cedar-wood chest with the seven brazen locks?*"

"By Castor and Pollux, two of my ancestors, I never thought of that," cried the Sultan Cubjak, starting to his feet.

But somebody else, and a good many other somebodies, had been thinking for years about this cedar-wood chest with the seven brazen locks, which was the great mystery and secret connected with the Grand Vizier Muley Mogrebbin Beg, and a mystery and secret that none could fathom. It stood in the centre of his sleeping apartment, and was apparently screwed to the floor, for the vizier's servitors had often unsuccessfully attempted in their master's absence to open it. And the seven brazen locks must have been contrived by some artificer even more cunning than the famous El Hobbs, the wonder-working Bramah, or the skilful Chubb Aga; for, although many subterfuges had been adopted by spies and traitors to pick the locks, they had resisted all such burglarious efforts. There the chest had been during the entire period of Muley Mogrebbin Beg's administration, defying curiosity, and laughing violence to scorn. When the labours of the day were over, the vizier would retire to his bedchamber, and sitting cross-legged on his beloved cedar-wood chest, smoke the pipe of placidity and meditation. And frequently those who were in quest of him—and when was not the powerful Muley Mogrebbin Beg sought after?—would find

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him sitting on a three-legged stool before his cedar-wood chest, reading the Koran, and ever and anon casting glances of affectionate contemplation, not unmingled with sighs, at that mysterious chest.

"I'll bet six to four"—the Gengoos were much given to betting—hissed in a serpent manner Boudjak Effendim, "that he keeps millions hidden in that chest—millions filched from your highness and from your immortal papa."

That afternoon, the Sultan Cubjak Ali got awfully tipsy. That night a regiment of the Royal Guards (Sable) surrounded the palace of Muley Mogrebbin Beg; and at exactly 12.30 p.m., the infuriated, and, to tell the truth, somewhat inebriated Sultan, rushed into the sleeping apartment of his good old vizier, followed by the chief executioner and seventeen slaves belonging to the Royal Torture Department. The miscreant Boudjak kept in the background, and hummed a little song about "getting upstairs and playing on the mandolin."

"Oh, Vizier," the Sultan commenced, with affected politeness, "may your shadow never be less. Could you oblige me with the loan of half a million of tomauns, *tout de suite, s'il vous plait Mounseer, oui*," for Cubjak was a master of the tongue of Frangistan.

"O King! O Light of the Universe!" replied Muley Mogrebbin Beg, getting off his chest and making three salaams, "I have them not. Times are so very hard, and your Highness has already spent all the current cash for the financial year."

"Perhaps, then," continued his Sovereign, trem-

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bling all over with rage, yet preserving a kind of sarcastic courtesy, "perhaps you'll draw a cheque?"

"The royal account is overdrawn at the bank of Coutts Khan," was the melancholy reply.

"Then *perhaps you'll take the half a million out of that cedar-wood chest of yours?*" said the Sultan.

"Your Highness, there is not one tomaun in that poor box."

"Thunder and turf!" roared the Sultan, "Son of a dog! Nephew of a tadpole! Deceased wife's brother of a bronchitic pig! Do you laugh at my beard? Giaour, Sabarka, Sabakoutchelovek, *ganache, cretin, cancre.* Ho, there, guards! Seize him, load him with fetters, tear out his eyes, knock out his teeth, screw off his thumbs, stop his grog, cook his goose. I'll warm him. I'll teach him to hide treasures from his Sultan and benefactor. Donner and blitzen. La allah ill allah! *Cospetto! Carajo!* Bow wow wow."

"*Ira furor brevis est.*" Cubjak Ali was decidedly a very passionate prince, and, when infuriated, became positively insane.

"There is no need," said Muly Mogrebbin Beg, rising with calm dignity, "to call in torturers or slaves. What there is in the chest your Highness is at liberty to examine." And so saying, he handed to Cubjak a ring of gold, to which hung seven brazen keys.

Seven guards took each a brazen key, and, with much creaking and groaning, the seven brazen locks ceded to pressure, and the cedar-wood chest was opened. What do you think Cubjak, the son of

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Shishak, the son of Psalmhanassan, the son of Caliph Cole, found in the chest in which he suspected his Grand Vizier of keeping his millions of tomauns?"

Upon my word, he found only these:—

A mangy cowskin mantle, a dingy Phrygian cap, a shepherd's crook, a leathern wallet, and an old worn out flute!

Such were the contents of the cedar-wood chest, and such was the secret of Muley Mogrebbin Beg.

These were the much-prized relics of his youth —that youth which returns no more; not even to Grand Viziers—not even to the Great Mogul, or the Great King Nebuchadnezzar.

Of course Boudjak Effendim was chopped into ten thousand pieces five minutes afterwards, by order of his justly irritated master. Of course Muley Mogrebbin Beg was restored to greater favour than ever, but he grew older and older every day, and his time being come, died.

Cras tibi, O my brother!

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THE

RABBETSES OF SHRIMPINGTON.

THE Rabbetses had always held their heads high in Shrimpington. Before the king, whose name nobody knew, took the charter of incorporation away, and degraded the borough into the Hundred of Haddockbone, a Rabbets had been mayor. If Charles the Second, coming from Cæsarville to St. Becketsbury on his way to London at the Restoration, had turned aside, as I did, at Daiseybridge Hill, Rabbets, mayor, would have presented him with an address, and would have been thenceforward Sir John Rabbets. The family had become reduced in circumstances, even as their native town had decayed. They had taken to small shop-keeping, mackerel fishing, and to divers industrial handicrafts; but no Rabbets had as yet been known to accept parochial relief; and there was sure, once in a generation, to be a rich Rabbets, who lived in London, and was quite the gentleman. A Rabbets in George the Fourth's time had positively taken the chair at a dinner at Cordwainer's Hall. Even the Rabbetses

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who in their youth were inclined to be "black sheep," morally, and ran away from their indentures, or their sweethearts, or Squire Gervoise's gamekeepers, like William Shakspeare—though they did not always proceed to London, hold horses at the door of the Globe Theatre, and afterwards write immortal plays—were yet accustomed, enlisting in the Britannic Majesty's land and sea forces, to perform prodigies of valour, and were speedily promoted to be boatswains or quartermasters. There was a Captain Rabbets, too, who was killed in Spain.

Philoprogenitiveness was strongly developed in the Rabbetses, and Daddy Rabbets, Joe's father, had a prodigious family. Bob took to the old man's business. Ned was apprenticed to him, afterwards doing journey-work. Bill went into the navy, and afterwards into the coast-guard. Sam, who was wild, set up a beershop, went to America, married, and was reported to have a "power" of negro slaves. Sal and Bet went out to service, the former afterwards marrying John Dumplingbeare, of the "Kings and Key." Nell, who was a cripple, stayed at home by the ingle nook, and was much beloved by her brothers and sisters; and Patience was adopted by her uncle in London—the rich Rabbets of that generation—who intended, it is said, to make a lady of her, and who, as a wholesale stationer in Sise Lane, City, and under the complimentary cognomen of "Ready-money Rabbets," was much respected by his ward and company, and by the public at large.

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Joe Rabbets was the very youngest of this numerous troop; and it was settled, almost before he was out of long-clothes, that he was to be a Carpenter. Everybody said that he had just the head for a carpenter; so soon as he could walk and speak, he seemed thoroughly to acquiesce in the arrangement which had been made on his behoof; and a sixpenny box of tools being bought for him to play with, jagged and chipped his juvenile fingers with great cheerfulness and contentment. It would have seemed, however, that nature had in the outset held contrary views respecting Joe's "mission" in Shrimpington and the world—certainly the number of pugilistic encounters which chequered his schoolboy life, and the highly-coloured gallery of bleeding noses, swollen lips, scarified knuckles, scratched cheeks, and eyes in a state of ecchymosis, which he was continually bringing home for the inspection of an admiring family circle, went somewhat far to favour the theory now and then broached, that Joe Rabbets was naturally intended for a prize-fighter, and, with weight, time, and training, would beat the Champion of England hollow, and bear off the belt triumphantly.

Although Joe was not often the defeated party, he nevertheless certainly did get, when he was about twelve years of age, a tremendous mauling from Bill Miggles, surnamed the "Bullock," who was the blacksmith's eldest apprentice. But this truculent young Mulciber was at least sixteen years old, and nearly double Joe's size and weight. The cause of dispute was the same that set Paris and

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Menelaus by the ears—the old, old story. The Helen was a little dark-eyed lass of twelve, exactly Joe's age, and his cousin to boot, whom the incipient blacksmith met as she was returning from school, and in spite of her tears, her blushes, her entreaties, and her resistance, forcibly saluted on both cheeks. She screamed for Joe—she had always a hankering for Joe—and he fortuitously coming round the corner on his way from settling a slight difficulty with the baker's boy, and after leaving his adversary washing his eyes and nose at the pump, and beaten to his heart's content, rescued the little beauty in distress, and to use the vernacular of pugilism, "slipped in" to the swart Miggles in the twinkling of a bed-post. Joe got a sound thrashing from that big young blacksmith; but he left on his adversary's face marks somewhat similar to those which you might examine on "cliffs that have been rent asunder."

Joe was apprenticed soon after this to old Fry the carpenter—a red-headed man, who deplored that Joe would never be serious enough for the undertaking business, which was a succursal to his trade, but was yet constrained to acknowledge the skill and quickness of the lad. Joe read a good deal during his apprenticeship: not novels, tales, or poetry—he was the most literal young fellow you could well meet with, and had not a grain of imagination in him—but hard-headed, crabbed books, that were as dry reading as though the leaves had been compressed sawdust: books about cones and sections, and forces and balances, full of

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intricate diagrams. He could not, or did not, invent anything himself, but he was a great improver and restorer. He mended clocks; he doctored up easy-chairs; he found out places for shelves where shelves had never been before; and the number of additions he could make to the capabilities of a chest of drawers, was really surprising. Joe never spoilt anything, never wasted timber, never "scamped" a job. He was as sober and industrious as the severest terms of his indentures could require, and he went to church every Sunday morning and evening. He used to see his cousin Loo, the little lass who had been kissed by the blacksmith, home from church sometimes. Joe was in the receipt of wages long before his apprenticeship had expired; and at nineteen he was earning twenty shillings a week. He wouldn't have anything to do with the undertaking part of the business, however, leaving that to Tom Raven, the other journeyman, who had a dolorous face, naturally, and was for his meekly melancholy manners (he was very great at night over a comic song at the "Kings and Key") extremely popular with bereaved relatives. Joe Rabbets left off fisticuffs as he approached manhood, and took to wrestling, leaping, running, swimming, and other athletic exercises, in which he became a great proficient, and the envy of the growing youth of Shrimpington. He was called "Wopping Joe Rabbets," partly in allusion to his stature—he was over six feet—partly to his bygone pugnacious propensities. He was, in truth, a fine, handsome young fellow, with a cheerful, open countenance,

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clear blue eyes, curly hair, light whiskers *slightly* inclined to be carroty, an irresistible smile, brawny, muscular limbs; the hands, though (which he was rather inclined to be vain of), small and white; and a frank, manly, and, it must be admitted, boisterous bearing. Such a fund of animal spirits, such a ringing, resonant laugh he had, such a way of swinging his great limbs about, and twirling his ash stick! He was as fond as ever, though he was but a journeyman carpenter, of reading the crabbed books about the cones and sections; and what need I tell you of him more, save that he was brave and generous, and that I think he would with equal readiness have cast himself headlong from Shakspeare's Cliff, at Cæsarville, as have told a lie.

Now all this time there had been growing up to womanhood, and to womanhood of radiant beauty, the little maiden of the dark eyes whom Bill Miggles had kissed against her will. It was a peculiarity also about this young lady—Loo Rabbets by name, Joe's cousin, as I have said, and daughter of Widow Rabbets, formerly lodge-keeper to Squire Gervoise, at the Priory, now retired upon a small pension, eked out by a sweetstuff shop—that she, too, was very fond of her book. But in quite a different manner to Joe. Loo was all for fairy-tales, poetry, ghost-stories, and sentimental novels: "The Farmer of Inglewood Forest," and the "Children of the Abbey." She had a pretty fancy for tambour-work and embroidery; she even evinced a decided talent for painting in water-colours; she

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had a sweet little voice, and a capital ear for music. She had a memory wondrously retentive; could recite whole scenes from Shakspeare, and what is more, seemed to understand the meaning of the poet: the chief prize-holder and show-girl at Miss Twigg's school, the envy and yet the pet of her companions; a girl to be spoilt and fondled, and made a lady of, and yet only a poor rheumatic lodge-keeper's daughter!

Tall, handsome, straight as an arrow, graceful; throwing her drapery round her as she walked in a hundred symmetrical folds; hair raven black, eyes flashing hazel, complexion of dusky mellow—her mother was a Miggles, and of that old Spanish blood—Loo Rabbets, with her beauty and her talents, had almost everything to make her the pride and wonder of the little town, and to bring about her destruction in this world. The beautiful poor have a dreadful homage paid them. The flatteries of those who surround a Cleopatra in printed calico are awful. From her earliest pinafores there were those to tell the penniless girl that she was handsome and clever, and that her face ought to be her fortune. She listened—Mephistopheles must have grinned to hear with what eagerness. From the cradle she was vain, credulous:—not heartless, but an incorrigible flirt.

And moreover a most delightful country maiden to be made a pet and *protegée* and plaything of. So thought Lady Maud Gervoise at the Priory. In his doting days the old Squire had *his* "brick-ship,"

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like Daddy Rabbets. His lune consisted in thinking that he was a lady's man; and he married, for the third time, Lady Maud Gulesmain, fifth daughter of the Earl of Shiverdefreeze. She was a fashionable lady, who enjoyed herself in London thoroughly during the season; then dragged her doting husband to Paris and the Continent; mid-wintered him at Brighton; and came to yawn, and set the parson and the schoolmaster at loggerheads, and distribute soup and flannels to the bedridden old women, for three months or so in every year, at Shrimpington Priory. She took a violent fancy to little Loo Rabbets when she was quite a child, and before her mother had become too infirm to perform the duties of lodge-keeping. She sent the girl first to Miss Twigg's, instead of suffering her to go, like her peers, to the national school; and when she was about fourteen positively took her to live with her at the Priory, and had a governess, who spoke French and played the harp, and painted pictures as beautiful as those in Mr. Belasco's shop in the High Street of St. Becketsbury, and who shared her multifarious accomplishments between Lady Maud's youngest sister, Lady Alethea, aged ten, who was billeted upon the Gervoise premises (his Lordship of Shiverdefreeze had never been young, and was much embarrassed), and the lowly child of the lodge-keeper. The rumour ran in Shrimpington that Loo was to be made a lady of, like Daddy Rabbets's daughter whom the mighty wholesale stationer in Sise Lane, City, had adopted.

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Lady Maud was very kind to her young *protegée*. She boxed her ears sometimes, and told her that she was a little beggar and a little pauper—fine ladies must have their caprices, and their nerves are *so* delicately strung—but she gave her plenty of pastry and blanc-mange, new silk frocks, and work-boxes inlaid with Tunbridge ware. She was very nearly as much be-petted and be-praised as her ladyship's lapdog.

When she was, to her sorrow, about seventeen, nothing would suit her patroness, Lady Maud, but to take her to London, where she lived in a fine house in Wilton Crescent, was often sent for to the drawing-room to display her accomplishments, and then bidden to go to the housekeeper's room and know her station. She went to Paris, and even to the Italian town of Nice, and came back more beautiful and more blooming than ever. She had, as yet, met with but some trifling little crosses and humiliations; but the spoon that she was to sup sorrow from was a very long one. She came back, and she, the patronized one, patronized the feminine juvenility of Shrimpington to her heart's content. She gave the girls her old frocks and bonnets. She showed them her drawings, and the newest steps in dancing. She retailed the latest fashionable news of the great world, and of its epitome in little—the Priory. Her poor little handsome head was turned with flattery and folly.

Her cousin Joe, the journeyman carpenter, had been in love with her for years—with a rollicking,

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jovial, uncompromising, out-spoken affection. He had fought for her as a boy, and would have fought for her again—and died for her—as a man. He had no rivals to fear in the little town. Loo had plenty of admirers; but no one cared to roughen the course of "Wopping Joe Rabbets's" true love. The sturdy young carpenter was beloved as well as feared. The girl was fond of him—very fond of him—at Shrimpington-super-Mare; but at the Priory, Mr. Glossop, Squire Gervoise's gentleman, made eyes at her, at which she smiled, not displeased; and in London, French valets, whiskered couriers, middle-aged butlers even, in the families of substantial noblemen, whispered soft things in her ear. She did not turn those ears away. And more dangerous expressions of admiration came to her from splendid gentlemen with lustrous moustaches, and swinging watchguards, and spurs in the heels of their beautiful, beautiful shining boots. Little notes, little rings and bracelets, little *Briquet* watches came to her. She did not send those presents back. Perhaps she did not know from whom they came. She would go back to Shrimpington soon, she thought; have done with flirtation, and marry Joe. She liked Joe. Lady Maud would set Joe up in business for himself, surely, and they would be, oh, so happy! But she was very handsome and very vain, and men are very wicked. She was half a lady's-maid and half a companion; and her mistress was an indolent, selfish Sybarite, who regarded her plaything in about

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the same light as she looked upon a learned macaw, or a musical box that played pretty tunes.

Heaven be forbearing to us! The girl fell. She was nineteen years of age. I declare that the noble scoundrel, who crushed the crystal vase of her purity to powder beneath his noble heel, tempted her just as one would tempt a child to be good, with sweetmeats with jewels and fine clothes. This is the way that foolish women are won. He kept his victim from bewailing her lot for a few months—just as the child is kept from crying—with horses and carriages, and fine shows and plays. He took her about, and exhibited her to his noble friends. Then he fell in love with a dancing-woman of the Opera House, and flung his poor plaything by—soiled, crushed, shattered for ever. So there was a rent instead of a girdle, and burning instead of beauty; and the Shrimpington girls talked over Loo Rabbets's downfall at the pump, as the German *mädchen* discussed poor Gretchen's crime at the well. When Loo Rabbets ate and drank now it was for two. A child was born of her shame.

No man nor child in Shrimpington-super-Mare, old or young, dared tell Joe Rabbets when the news came of his happiness's great wreck. But he learnt the evil tidings soon enough. The prattling servants from the Priory came down town. The scandal was buzzed about from the "Godwin's Head" to the "Kings and Key." Joe overheard Raven, who did the undertaking business, talking over the matter with Miggles, now a working black-

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smith, who, if report spake true, hammered his wife (in a comparative degree) as well as his anvil. Joe rushed half frantic to the Priory, and demanded an audience of the Lady Maud. It was granted at once. He might have had half-a-dozen audiences for the asking for. The languid lady was rather pleased than otherwise to discourse upon the hideous turpitude of her quondam favourite, on whom she had turned her back, she said, at once, and for ever. She was very eloquent upon what she had done for Loo, on the advantages and opportunities she had placed in her way, on the pains she had bestowed upon her education, and her lamentable ingratitude. Her education! It had been better for her to be the dullest parish brat, stammering over a horn-book, and at eight years old sent to field work till her spine was arched, and the skin of her hands peeled off. The Lady Maud said that Louisa Rabbets was a bad, wicked, ungrateful girl. She declared that she ought to be sent to the treadmill, that she ought to be whipped; she prophesied that she would come to a bad end; she proffered Joseph Rabbets a five-pound note, and advised him to marry Tibbets, her own maid, "a highly respectable young person, who thoroughly knew her station." Heavens and earth! had the miserable girl yonder ever held any station to know? Murmuring some incoherent words of the refusal of the money, Joe ran out of the Priory, and so back to Shrimpington. The poor wretch had determined to see his father and brethren once more, and then blow his brains out.

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By mercy he paused, and was saved from the great sin of self-murder. But for months it seemed likely that Joe Rabbets would go melancholy mad. He spoke to no one, he walked with no one, he scarcely ate or drank, he never opened a book, he worked with a moody, almost ferocious energy. Only once, when the blacksmith uttered some taunting words about the lost girl in his presence, he felled that graceless lout to the earth, with one blow of his mighty fist; and, leaving him there stunned and bleeding, walked away without one word.

Joe went away soon afterwards, and worked for Mr. Dawks, the carpenter and joiner, of St. Becketsbury. He was absent two whole years; and when he came back to Shrimpington, time had been good to him, and for all the awful cicatrice remaining, his wound was healed. So time will comfort you, dear friend in your bereavement. So time will comfort you, Calypso, though you stand by the lorn seashore wringing your hands, while the bark that bears the false Odysseus sinks beneath the horizon for ever. Time is good for us all, although the good grieve longest. Not often does Dido immolate herself for Æneas' sake. We do not forget, but a kind curtain falls between the present moment and the bitter past, and remembrance stirs the veil but seldom. Joe Rabbets, however, was no longer the jovial and rollicking carpenter of yore. He was a very staid and sober young man, cheerful enough, sometimes, but mostly inclined to thought-

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fulness and "keeping himself to himself." Of one thing, however, he did not retain an exclusive monopoly, but imparted the intelligence to all who had a right to know it. Joe was about to be married. He had courted and won his master's daughter, Bessy Dawks; who had early seen his sorrow, and had sprinkled him with precious drops from those inexhaustible waters of sympathy, which, Heaven bless them, are always welling up from the hearts of good women. She was not very handsome, Bessy, and she was very small and slight in stature; but the face was a kind one, but the eyes were tender and trusting, but the whole little frame was an image of neatness and simple grace. Bessy was what you term, a serious young woman. Dawks, of St. Becketsbury, her papa, was a gruff religionist. Left a widower early, he had undertaken the training of Bessy in conjunction with his sister, a spinster of mature age, who was always in great perturbation regarding the spiritual welfare of her neighbours, and the major part of whose devotional exercises consisted in dismal groaning, well sustained. Between these two professors, Bessy grew up to be serious. The girls sneered at her, and called her a hypocrite; the lads laughed, and called her a little Puritan. If to be meek and humbly religious, charitable, patient, and obedient—if to be this was to be a Puritan, Bessy Dawks certainly was one. She was the plainest of scholars, and, beyond the "Christians' Reading," her literary circle was confined to a most confusing, but vehement work of

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very large dimensions, written against Bishops by the Reverend Mr. O'Goggerdan, a separatist of the last century. The violent polemics of this controversialist frightened the meek Bessy Dawks somewhat; but the book was a legacy from her uncomfortable aunt, Hannah; and she prized it exceedingly, and read it assiduously when not occupied with household duties.

The wedding ring was bought at Prawnby's shop, No. 7 in the High Street, and there was a sober serious wedding at the old church. Daddy Rabbets (now quite superannuated) was moved at the ceremony, in the intervals of floods of tears, to address the clergyman respecting some improvements in boat-building; but the sexton led him out, and the two had a quiet talk together over a parishioner's grave. Mr. and Mrs. Joe went into housekeeping immediately. Dawks would have given them five hundred pounds down, or taken Joe into partnership with him; but the latter said that he preferred residing at Shrimpington for the present, doing journeywork, for a year or two longer, with old Fry. He took Gummiz's house in Shire Lane, at five shillings a week, Gummiz having bettered himself in the oyster line at St. Becketsbury. Bessy was a capital housekeeper. Dawks insisted on furnishing them, and the reverend Mrs. Canon Challis of Becketsbury, who loved Bessy, although she was a dissenter, sent her such a stock of bed and table linen that Mrs. Whelks of the "Godwin's Head" might have been moved to envy at the view. Joe

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had some savings. His wages did not go into the tavern-keeper's till, though he took his pint of an evening over the paper, and paid his subscription to his Foresters' lodge. Their home was a picture of cleanliness and comfort, and Joe was reckoned as destined to be one more of the Rabbetses who would hold their heads high in Shrimpington.

Before the year was out Bessy had a baby—a tremendous boy (the finest boy ever seen, neighbours *loq.*) who sparred at the nurse, demanded, in an unknown tongue, lacteal sustenance with the lungs of a young giant; growing alarmingly red in the face at the slightest provocation, and wrestled with his baby-linen like an infant Hercules strangling the serpents. He was a source of great quiet solace and contentment to his father, who took to enjoying his pipe and pint now at home, instead of at the "Kings and Key," watching this young shaver as he lay sprawling in his unclad innocence on the hearthrug. I call him a "shaver," for there can be no doubt that this one was destined also to be a carpenter. He was emphatically a planed, and chiselled, and well morticed child, a thoroughly square boy, plumbable and ruleable. They called him Joe, of course. When he became to be about fourteen months old, it was perfectly clear that he would take after his erst-pugnacious father, rather than his meek and timid mother. This somewhat bewildered Bessy—a fighting child was an anomaly in a serious family; but little Joe had her eyes, her smile; and I believe that, in her secret heart,

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the little woman was delighted at the boy's boldness.

Yes; it was about this time that Shrimpington began to be Haunted. Not by the unquiet spirits of those whose carved effigies lay in the old church, but by a living phantom. Nobody told Joe Rabbets about the ghost; but he saw its presence shudderingly ere long. No one word passed between him and his true wife on the subject. She had known the story of Loo Rabbets's shame long since.

Which miserable creature had the hardihood to come back to the town whose propriety she had outraged, and to the family she had disgraced. Not that there was any outward hardihood about poor Loo. She came back very weak and tottering, with pale cheeks, eyes darker, and more lustrous than ever—but ah, so sad! Her noble friend had deserted her, somewhere abroad, leaving her almost penniless, and with a little girl, now about a year old. She had come back to her mother to be very ill and penitent, to bear her cross, and try to rear her child in better paths than those she had trodden. No one could bear very hardly on this bruised reed. Some of the girls had made up their minds to jeer and flout her; some feminine noses were at first turned up when she went furtively about to purchase the articles—her mother was now very infirm—required for the house; but her white, woe-begone face and feeble gait disarmed even the most pitiless. So they let her be. She worked her fingers to the bone, almost, at needlework, to support herself and

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the child, yet even then she could find time to put hems of marvellous embroidery to the little child's white garments. She kept it scrupulously neat, and tended it incessantly. The little worked petticoats and caps were the only remants left of her old vanity. You know the sort of embroidery I mean. Ladies are always working it now upon long strips of linen, and it is based upon a sort of "pinking," of which the earliest specimens I ever saw were upon winding-sheets. Squire Gervoise by this time was dead, and the Lady Maud gone to live at Florence upon her jointure. Mr. Fisk, the young curate, who had known Loo in her sunshine, and repeatedly warned her and reproved her, came to see her often now. He said that she was truly penitent, and that he approved of this voluntary expiation in residing in the place where her pride and her shame were so well known. She kept mostly in the back parlour of the little sweetstuff shop, and she grew paler every day.

It was Christmasy weather, early in December, but late one afternoon, when Joe Rabbets, swinging his basket of tools in one of his stalwart hands, was walking from Daiseybridgehill to Shrimpington. Joe had had a lift by the coach from St. Becketsbury; and this Kentish Giovanni had stayed away four whole days, the profligate! from his wedded wife. It may be pleaded, however, in Joe's defence, that he had been engaged on a job at the Reverend Canon Challis's, in the Dean's Yard, and being an old *employé* and humble friend of the reverend gen-

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tleman, had been favoured with board and lodging during his stay, at the very canonical residence itself. The Reverend Canon Challis was a merry man, with a rich running voice, like preserved turtle soup that is being melted. He had a fancy for calling people by their Christian names, and an affected sternness in his manner—always contradicted a moment afterwards by that laugh of his—that made him a subject of great wonder and delight to the little boys whom he was always about to have punished by the schoolmaster, never keeping his promise to them. When he came into the kitchen on the day of Joe's arrival, and said to the cook, "Jane Stevens, you will take care that Joseph Rabbets has as much beef and as much beer as he wants; do you hear, woman? Mary Dollamore (biting your nails as usual, I see), your mistress will tell you where Joseph Rabbets's bed is to be made up; Scullery-maid, mind your work, girl," you would have thought that these were the words of an autocrat; but you would have speedily changed your opinion to hear the Reverend Canon Challis trot up the kitchen stairs, rattling his watch seals, and laughing heartily to think what an ill-tempered fellow he was. He was a photographer, this jocund canon, a botanist, a sketcher of landscapes with a red-hot poker on pieces of board, a correspondent of "Notes and Queries;" and Joe had plenty of work during the four days in the study, the operating room and the workshop. The reverend Challis had a tribe of the noisiest children ever heard in the quiet precincts of a Dean's Yard; and their mamma was

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a stout lady with a beaming countenance, who was an adept in the cultivation of peaches, and drank two glasses and a half of port wine every day after dinner. When Joe, having received his wages, left the house to return home, Mrs. Dean ran downstairs and confided to him, neatly pinned up in blue paper, such a present for Bessy, in the shape of a new cap, that Dollamore the housemaid had well-nigh choked with rage when she saw it on her mistress's dressing-table. "And you are to tell her, Joe," said Mrs. Dean, "that it isn't wicked to wear ribbons in her cap. Tell her not to mind that prosy Mr. O'Goggerdan, but to ask Mr. Fisk."

So Joe walked down into Shrimpington, his tool-basket in one hand, the precious cap in the other. He felt unusually cheerful and light-hearted; and, as the wintry sun smiled out upon him through the skeleton boughs, he positively hummed a tune. There were relics in him of the old rollicking Joe of years long past.

It was seven in the evening when he got to the quiet, neat little house in Shire-lane; but let me, for the nonce, be swifter of foot than he, and precede him to the cosy little lodging-room and kitchen, where his demure wife sat waiting for her lord.

Everything very bright, everything in order, and in its place. Plenty of furniture, well bees'-waxed. Recess in flat—as the stage directions say—open, and with a very white bed glimmering in the obscurity, towards which Mrs. Rabbets, sitting on a low chair before the fire, cast from time to time

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anxious glances. For so quiet and equable a woman, she was this evening unwontedly agitated. She looked at the clock, she looked at the cat, she looked at the kettle; she fidgeted on her chair; she almost lost her temper with a muffin which she was toasting for her husband's tea, and which would persist in tumbling off the fork. Finally, she took refuge in Mr. O'Goggerdan against Bishops; but that quarrelsome divine seemed to have lost his influence over her for once; and his abusive sentences chased each other over the page before Bessy's unheeding eyes.

Joe came in at last, very tired, but cheery. Bessy made his tea, and watched him enjoy it with great solicitude, but she was as fidgety as ever. I may as well state that the first act of this bold carpenter on entering his home—an act, by the way, which was an invariable custom of his—was to kiss his wife. I cannot sufficiently commend this kindly custom to the imitation and observance of all married couples. But in drawing her towards him to kiss her, Joe observed, in some surprise, that his wife's eyes were quite red and swollen.

"Why, Bess, my lass," he exclaimed, "you've been crying."

"N—n—no, Joseph," stammered Mrs. Rabbets. "I—I've been reading the gentleman's work by firelight, and you know how bad that is for the eyes, Joe."

"The gentleman's work," was the name by which the famous *opus* of O'Goggerdan *versus* Bishops was known in the Dawks-Rabbets family. Joe seemed

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but half satisfied with his wife's explanation, and catching up the muffin that had misbehaved itself, speedily put an end to the crimes of the thing by eating it. He would have been less satisfied had he known that the firelight story was one of the few fibs that Bessy had ever told in her life.

"But where," Joe asked—looking round when he had finished his meal, delivered the cap, recounted his four days' adventures with Mr. and Mrs. Dean, and lighted his pipe—"where's little Joe? Not gone to bed? Too early yet, surely, and his dad coming home and all."

"N-n-no, not gone to bed," answered Bessy, still stammering, and this time blushing in addition. "I lent him to Mrs. Roddrick's, at the dairy, for half an hour."

The practice of "lending" children of tender years for short periods, and for the inspection and admiration of female neighbours, was a very common one in Shrimpington; and as Joe was a very fine child, he was constantly in requisition. Joe the elder had no particular objection to this infantile loan-society principle, and consoling himself with the remark that the young "shaver" would be home soon, went on smoking his pipe in silence. But he would have objected very strongly had he known that this child-lending story added another to the fibs which the mendacious Mrs. Rabbets was accumulating against herself.

"Joe," she said, suddenly.

"Well, Bess."

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"Will you go up town and take a pint, dear? I want to be left alone awhile."

"Do you want to get rid of me, then?" asked Joe, half piqued and half good-humouredly. "It isn't washing-day."

"No, no, Joe," his little wife answered. "It isn't that; but I do want you away, dear. I've got a headache, and, and—I've got a woman coming to gossip. Let me be for half an hour, my man."

Now Mrs. Bessy Rabbets was not at all given to the affliction of headaches, and still less to the pestilent practice of gossiping. But in this well-ordered household the wife commanded, and was as well obeyed in all things appertaining to her province, and never overstepping that province, as the husband. Both were sovereigns in their own territories, and this is why they lived so happily together. Joe concluded that his wife had some good reason to desire his absence, and accordingly gave her another kiss, and went forth into the night. The first thing his wife did when the door closed was to sit down, bury her face in her hands, and have what women call a "regular good cry." She seemed better after this, but no neighbour came to gossip, and she was more fidgety than ever, flitting in and out of the recess where the snowy bed was, like a restless little elfin.

Joe came back at the expiration of the half-hour quite white and haggard. It was his wife now who might have taxed him with having red eyes. He sat down by the fireside, silent, rocking to and fro.

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His wife's heart told her that he had heard the tidings—that he knew that Louisa was dead.

Yes, she had been permitted to depart. No more on earth were her tears to flow. Those eyes would never glisten again; those lips would never smile, those ears never listen to compliments and flatteries, more. No more were her hands to deck her perishable clay with gewgaws; no more were her feet to patter nimbly through the avenues of Vanity Fair. She had been suffering for months under a slow and wasting disease, and now Heaven had released her.

Bessy came up and laid her hand upon her husband's shoulder. He turned and looked at her with eyes full of dolorous love and trust. He knew she had never been jealous of the dead woman.

"The Lord be merciful to her," said Bessy, sobbing.

"Amen," answered the carpenter.

"Poor girl, poor girl!" he went on after some little time, some little indulgence of natural grief. "A sorry end to come to, a sorry end, and a sad! She was hardly used, hardly used, Bess, and I loved her very dearly."

She was not jealous to hear him say it. She took his hand in hers, and kissed it.

"I thought you might have heard of it on your way up street, Joe," she said. "She went off as quiet and peaceable as a lamb at four o'clock. I was there, and—"

"I know you were," the carpenter cried out, "and bless you for it, Bess."

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"I was there," the little woman continued, "and she kissed me only five minutes before she died. Mr. Fisk was there, and told her that she had made her peace with all—even with you, Joe, for you had forgiven her long since—and that she had all to hope and nought to fear. She bade me forgive her too! What had I to forgive her for, poor soul? She gave Mr. Fisk—I *do* like Mr. Fisk—a lock of her beautiful black hair for you, and I'll plait it into a chain, Joe, and you shall wear it round your neck with your new silver watch from Prawnby's."

She tried to kiss away the tears that were coursing down the carpenter's cheeks.

"She'll be buried on Thursday," she went on. "I hope Raven—"

"Raven be——!" the carpenter cried, vehemently, but stopped, blushing. The old Adam was not quite gone out of fighting Joe Rabbets, and in another moment there would have been an oath. "No mortal man," he continued, more calmly, "shall make Loo Rabbets's coffin, or lay her in it, but her cousin Joe. I'll be at work at it at seven to-morrow morning. I know thou'lt see to the rest, Bess, for the poor old mother is half-blind, half-bedridden."

"Have you—have you seen her, Joe?" asked his wife, timidly. "Louisa?"

"No," answered the carpenter, sadly. "I could not bear the sight to-night. Some of the neighbours will watch by the body, and mind the child, both helpless enough now, Heaven knows!"

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He was sitting with his little wife on his knee, smoothing her soft brown hair. He was a very giant to her; and never surely was a comelier parasite seen nestling round a sturdy oak.

"Bess, my girl," he continued, "'tis about that poor motherless little child that I want to talk to thee."

"Yes, Joe."

"We've been man and wife now," he said, "for three and twenty months, and not one bitter word has grown up between thee and me. The Great Giver of all good has bestowed on us a dear boy, a bond to draw us closer together, Bess, a gift for which I am very thankful."

He halted in his discourse, and looked musingly at the fire, asked if Mrs. Rodricks had brought little Joe back, hoped she would not be long, began again, stopped, and seemed altogether as fidgety as his wife had been an hour since.

"Bess," he broke out at last, "I want to ask thee a favour."

"Name it, dear."

"Why, look here, now," he proceeded, with painful deliberation. "Life isn't so hard with us. You keep house for me like a little queen. I've plenty of gear and shear"—he looked round with some pride on his abundant chattels; "thanks to you, I've always good meals for us all; good clothes to my back, always something in the savings-bank; and besides that, I know, woman—for I've watched thee when thou least thought of it—that thou hast

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always a crust and a copper for the poor and needy."

"Heaven has been very good to us, Joe, and we are very comfortable."

"I'm earning, Bess, three-and-thirty shillings a-week. In the new year I shall be a two-pounder. Before long we shall be in business for ourselves. We have but three mouths to feed, and what would be a fourth, and such a little one, too, Bess?"

She turned away her head, but laid it on her husband's shoulder.

"Oh, Bess, Bess!" he said, "think of that forlorn child in the house of death yonder. What is to become of her? What will she do? Will the villain who ruined and deserted her mother take care of her? Can poor old Granny Rabbets do aught for her? I tell thee, Bess, there's ne'er a Rabbets in Shrimpington save myself who will touch that child with the finger's end, for the disgrace her mother has brought on the family. The child will have to go to the workhouse, Bess."

"The workhouse! Oh, anything rather than that!"

"I tell thee they'll have to send her to the union," he continued; "unless—unless you'll be of my mind. What will be this poor little thing in cost to us? If Heaven gives us more children, He has given me health, and strength, and energy to work. Oh, my woman, my woman! let us think of Him who remembers the widow and fatherless, and bade them suffer little children to come unto

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Him. Let us bring the baby home and rear it for our own."

The wife had burst into passionate sobs, but answered never a word.

"You wont," said the carpenter, sadly. "You refuse to do this, Bessie!—— I know it was bold of me to ask you, my own dear love, after what has past long since; I know——"

"Oh, Joe, Joe!" the woman cried out, casting herself at his feet before the winter fire—"*the child is there—there, Joe, in the bed!*"

She rather dragged than led her husband to the recess where I saw the glimmer of the snowy bed. With one trembling hand she held the light, with the other she turned down the coverlet, and there were *two* little innocents, boy and girl, nestling and snuggling close to one another. And though those poor mortal parents could not see them, I think that angels' wings were fanning the children, and that it was a divine lullaby that made them smile in their sleep.

Bessy had brought the little lamb home, and laid it beside her own. So would you have done, dear Lady—to whom, albeit you know it not—I dedicate these Shadows. She knew her husband's generosity, she trusted in his kindness, but she had not dared, at first, to tell him of the adoption she had made.

O, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters, when we sit at church and hear the parson preach about God's mercy, think what a shining light and bright

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example that mercy should be to us! Think that we all—to the humblest of us—have it in our power to imitate, in our degree, the Divine Exemplar, even though it be at the distance of a universe, by being merciful to one another.

THE END.

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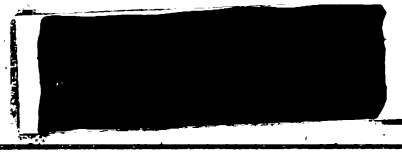

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